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10 April 2002

B5-0200/2002 }
B5-0205/2002 }
B5-0223/2002 }
B5-0233/2002 }

RC1

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 50(5) of the Rules of Procedure by

- Geoffrey Van Orden, Jacqueline Foster, Philip Charles Bradbourn, Malcolm Harbour and Timothy Kirkhope, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Pervenche Berès, Robert J.E. Evans, Martine Roure, Danielle Darras and Gilles Savary, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Baroness Sarah Ludford, Chris Davies and Dirk Sterckx, on behalf of the ELDR Group
- Jean Lambert, Alima Boumediene-Thiery, Pierre Jonckheer, Heide Rühle and Patsy Sörensen, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- PPE-DE (B5-0200/2002),
- ELDR (B5-0205/2002),
- Verts/ALE (B5-0223/2002),
- PSE (B5-0233/2002),

on the issue of refugees and obstruction of rail freight through the Channel Tunnel

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PE 317.146}
PE 317.151}
PE 317.169}
PE 317.179} RC1

European Parliament resolution on the issue of refugees and obstruction of rail freight through the Channel Tunnel

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the obstruction of freight trains through the Channel Tunnel since November 2001 and the complete stoppage of rail freight traffic recurrently over the past month because migrants for whom illicit entry is the only way to reach the UK are attempting to access the trains,
 - whereas major difficulties at the entrance to the Channel Tunnel are getting worse, in spite of a number of joint efforts made by the French and British governments to curb the attempts to travel through the tunnel illegally, which are proving ineffective,
 - having regard to the failure of the French and British authorities to provide adequate security for the Calais-Fréthun rail freight terminal,
 - having regard to the decision of a French court on 1 February 2002 to reject an application made by Eurotunnel to seek the closure of the Sangatte refugee centre, which is located only about a mile from the freight terminal and the Tunnel entrance,
 - whereas efforts to resolve these difficulties must address the real causes of this situation, namely the presence, close to the Channel Tunnel, of illegal immigrants and asylum-seekers who daily, and in large numbers, attempt to travel through the tunnel in order to reach the United Kingdom, and having regard to the absence of an appropriate response,
 - having regard to the Single Market requirement for free movement of goods between Member States of the European Union and the fact that trains from Italy, Germany, Spain and other EU Member States as well as France and the UK are adversely affected,
- A. whereas the question of asylum-seekers in the Calais area is not a new problem, considering that the British and French governments have been fully aware of the worsening situation for over two years and have not taken effective action,
- B. whereas at least nine people have already died in their attempts to illegally travel through the Channel Tunnel and there is a serious risk of further fatalities and accidents in the Tunnel,
- C. whereas the impact of the situation on trade and businesses is deeply damaging, with a threat to some 8000 jobs, with business losses of some € 12 million a week expected; whereas, furthermore, the impact of these developments on private operators such as Eurotunnel has been particularly damaging, with € 30 million of losses attributed directly to the disruption of services and a further € 8 million to the cost of extra security,

- D. whereas the inability of rail freight operators to guarantee secure and dependable rail shipment between continental Europe and the UK means that 2 250 000 extra lorry kilometres are being driven every week, with clear adverse environmental and safety implications,
- E. whereas, as they currently stand, national legislation and Community legislation cannot provide a satisfactory response to the difficulties connected with the presence of illegal immigrants close to the Channel Tunnel, and recognising that a sensible practical and effective approach needs to be adopted by the British and French governments and coordinated with other EU Member States,
1. Draws attention to the critical and deteriorating situation around the Channel Tunnel, which requires urgent action by the authorities concerned to restore normal conditions as soon as possible;
 2. Acknowledges that, in order to provide a satisfactory long-term response to these difficulties, it is necessary to adopt a humane approach in terms of asylum and immigration policy;
 3. Considers that the long-term solution lies within European asylum and immigration systems, including responsibility-sharing; calls therefore for urgent action to ensure that asylum-seekers can be processed fairly and rapidly, while traffickers and illegal immigrants are effectively deterred;
 4. Calls on the British and French governments to reach a solution dealing with the asylum claims at the Sangatte centre and to take a lead in developing further EU measures;
 5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the British and French governments.