

Transcripts of BBC Radio 4 News Coverage

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|
| TRANSCRIPT 1 | (Radio News 9/5) | 2 |
| TRANSCRIPT 2 | (Today 10/5) | 2 |
| TRANSCRIPT 3 3 | (World Tonight 12/5) | |
| TRANSCRIPT 4 | (World at One 14/5) | 6 |
| TRANSCRIPT 5 | (Today Programme 15/5) | 7 |
| TRANSCRIPT 6 | (Today 18/5) | 8 |
| TRANSCRIPT 7 | (World at One 1/6) | 12 |
| TRANSCRIPT 8 | (World at One 7/6) | 16 |
| TRANSCRIPT 9 | (sequence of interviews Today 8/6) | 20 |
| TRANSCRIPT 10 | (PM 14/6) | 28 |
| TRANSCRIPT 11 29 | (Today, 20/5) | |

RADIO TRANSCRIPT 1 (Radio News 9/5)

James Cox: William Hague has dismissed the breakaway Pro-Europe Conservatives as fanatics after a claim that next month's European elections will finish him off as the Tory leader. The leader of the rebel group John Stevens said that despite Tory successes in the local council elections, the party's split over Europe would see its share of the vote fall to around 25% in next month's poll. But Mr Hague, interviewed by David Frost, thoroughly rejected the claims. Nicholas Jones reports.

Nicholas Jones: The Conservatives knew that they could hardly fail to make significant gains in last week's council elections. But because of the party's continuing feud over Europe, the Tories' chances of a continued recovery in next month's European elections are clouded in uncertainty. The pro-European Conservatives' leader, John Stevens, said William Hague was mad to have ruled out British membership of the Euro as far ahead as the next Parliament. He predicted that the Tory vote would drop to 25% and that it would be the end of Mr Hague. The Tory leader hit back, saying the pro-European group was a bunch of fanatics who were way out of line in wanting a United States of Europe.

RADIO TRANSCRIPT 2 (Today 10/5)

Sue MacGregor: What about Mr Prodi's suggestion that the Commission should one day logically be the Government of Europe?

John Maples: Well, it's interesting that that's how he sees it. They forget that they are not elected, that there is a Council of Ministers who are supposed to be in charge of the EC, but we are seeing the Commission arrogating to itself more and more power and, of course, if we are to have a Single Currency, tax harmonisation, a common foreign policy and EC army, it sounds to me that Mr Prodi would be the head of an EU state.

Sue MacGregor: Well, if you see these dangers ahead, why is it that Mr Hague is about to launch a moderate, mainstream manifesto for the EU elections next month?

John Maples: Well we will be making exactly these points. That we want to be in Europe, but not run by it. The Single Market is of terrific benefit to the UK and for the whole of Europe, through encouraging trade, and you and I can go and work in Italy and Germany or start a business there. I think all of that is absolutely excellent. What we don't want to see is the Commission doing what Mr Prodi seems to be suggesting, which is actually becoming the Government of Europe in all sorts of areas where it is absolutely unnecessary.

Sue MacGregor: Won't you get more votes if you came out more strongly against Europe - what you are doing is now giving the impression of sitting on the fence and preventing a split which we know is there for the asking for the Tory Party?

John Maples: You will have to wait until the campaign starts to see whether we are sitting on the fence or not, and I think you'll see that we are not. We're not against

Europe, absolutely not - we are wholly in favour of a single market, the business and trade aspects of Europe, and we're an enthusiastic supporter of it. What we are not enthusiastic about is the idea of a European superstate with its own money, its own taxes, its own foreign policy and army, and I think this talk of an army shows how ridiculous the whole thing is.

Sue MacGregor: But you are a member of a party whose position is very much on the line, and the vote on June 10 is going to be very important for Mr Hague.

John Maples: It's a very important vote for everybody to decide where they want the EU to go. This is a very fundamental decision Britain has to make - does it want to see the EU develop into a sort of federal government, and having an army seems to me to be a characteristic of a state and a government, and if you don't want that I think you have to think very seriously who you vote for, because the government actually signed an agreement with the French to do exactly that.

Sue MacGregor: Right, you have made your point.

TRANSCRIPT 3 (World Tonight 12/5)

CHRIS PATTEN APPOINTED

Andrew Little: It is widely reported that the latest recruit to the broad church that is New Labour is the former Conservative Party Chairman, Chris Patten, Tony Blair is said to have decided to appoint Mr Patten for the next European Commissioner to replace Leon Brittan when he steps down later this year. In so doing, the PM has shown once again that he is prepared to drive a coach and horses through convention. Traditionally this appointment should have been the gift of the leader of the Opposition. It was after all the late John Smith who nominated the UK's last appointment to the Commission - Neil Kinnock. Joining me now is the MEP, John Stevens, formerly of the Conservative Party now leader of the breakaway pro Euro Conservative Party which is contesting all the Euro constituencies at next month's Euro elections - Mr Steven's, presumably you would welcome this appointment if it turns out to be made

John Stevens: Certainly if Chris Patten is the Pro-Euro Conservative Candidate for the Commissionership (indistinct)

Andrew Little: What do you think Tony Blair is up to, appointing Chris Patten?

John Stevens: I think what he wanted is someone who would be a powerful campaigner in a forthcoming referendum on the Euro. I think, although Alastair Goodlad is in many respects a good chap - he's quite famously taciturn in British politics, he might not have been seen to be a very aggressive campaigner in favour of the Euro. Alastair being of Hague's preferred candidate

Andrew Little: Is Chris Patten the sort of person who could come back after a stint in Europe and campaign side-by-side with Tony Blair on a referendum on entry into the Euro?

John Stevens: Certainly the attitude taken by British Commissioners in any referendum on the Single Currency would be tremendously important and they would carry very great weight, it seems to me, in that campaign.

Andrew Little: And where does all this leave the leader of the Party you used to belong to, the Conservative Party: William Hague?

John Stevens: Well clearly it a bit of a humiliation but I think he may well be relieved in some respects that Chris Patten is not any more on the domestic political scene. There was some suggestion that he was another king over the water in the same way that Michael Portillo was.

Andrew Little: I suppose this does put paid to any prospects of Chris Patten leading the Conservative Party?

John Stevens: Oh I think Chris has made it quite clear for some time that his interests lie more in Brussels than in domestic politics.

Andrew Little: Sion Simon is an associate Editor of the Spectator and he is in our radio car. What do you think is going on what is Tony Blair's strategy?

Sion Simon: Well Alan, what's being assumed at the moment is that Chris Patten will replace Leon Brittan as the Tory Commissioner, but that he would be the Junior Commissioner and that Neil Kinnock will succeed to Leon Brittain as the senior Commissioner, as the senior of Britain's two Commissioners

Andrew Little: That's certainly the way it has been reported that Neil Kinnock will assume seniority once Leon Brittan steps down

Sion Simon: That's right - well the reports that I've been getting this evening and I should stress that this is, at this stage, unconfirmed and very much unofficial, but sources I have been talking to today are suggesting that in fact that might not be the case and that the real story and it would be a very big story is Chris Patten might be appointed senior commissioner, that Neil Kinnock might be moved on to an ambassadorship, maybe in South Africa, which is now under the presidency of his old friend from London days and a new Labour Commissioner would be junior and you'd therefore have the genuinely unprecedented situation, that of the Labour Prime Minister appointing a Conservative, senior Commissioner who'd be a very, very influential and powerful voice not only in Brussels but a terrible thorn in the side - a real prince across the water for William Hague to deal with

Andrew Little: Neil Kinnock in South Africa - well you heard it hear first. It's interesting speculation. It is of course speculation, we have to wait and see whether any of this comes true - but if it is true that Chris Pattern is going to Brussels appointed by Tony Blair, is Blair building some kind of grand party alliance that will cut across that fissure that is Europe in the Tory Party as part of a way of getting Britain into the Euro?

Sion Simon: Oh definitely, without a doubt the big beasts in the Tory Party, Ken

Clarke, Michael Heseltine, Chris Patten, the big pro-Europeans have all made it quite clear that if it comes to a choice between the European Currency and the Conservative Party, they'll take the Currency, not the Party - and the big problem for William Hague in that is that these men are big highly respected top players who play well in public, whereas he and his shadow cabinet are really struggling for anything like that kind of popular resonance.

Andrew Little: It does seem, on the face of it, devastating for Hague doesn't it?

Sion Simon: Well, as we say, this is, as yet, all unconfirmed; it is speculative at the moment. It is only a question of whether it is bad for Hague or very, very bad indeed for him and the Tories.

Andrew Little: We know that Tony Blair has a huge majority and that he is able for now to show, in effect, contempt for the Opposition. It is yet another indicator, if you like, that William Hague is not yet in a position to oppose the government on the whole European question.

Sion Simon: That's certainly true on one level though it is worth making the point in terms of precedent that John Smith originally very strongly wanted to appoint Neil Kinnock a year or two before he was finally appointed and it was John Major who refused initially the Kinnock appointment - it was only several years later on that Kinnock was actually appointed so there is a certain precedent for this - not quite as unheard of as some people might think.

TRANSCRIPT 4 (World at One 14/5)

SIR NORMAN FOWLER RETIRES

Nick Clarke: Yet another senior conservative has announced he's ready to quit the shadow cabinet. Sir Norman Fowler, at present Mr Hague's home affairs spokesman, says he'll stand down at the next re-shuffle, joining Michael Howard and Gillian Sheppard in deciding to call it a day and leaving only a handful of survivors from John Major's cabinet. It would of course help Mr Hague to detach his party from memories of past failures, but he is also losing more and more experienced heads around what he likes to call his kitchen table. Sir Norman insists that the party is in better shape, though, than when William Hague took over ...

Sir Norman: It was never going to be a recovery where we would go from black to white in one step, but what is happening under William's leadership, and he deserves major credit for this, is that step by step, we are recovering steadily and I think that the latest evidence of this was the local council elections...

Nick Clarke: But well, I mean, I'm sorry, you've got... You are going, Gillian Sheppard is going, it looks like ..er.. a bit like a clear out of the old guard. I'm using unkind words, but you know what I mean..I

Sir Norman: Yes, of course, I know...(interrupted)

Nick Clarke: And I think also some people may see it as the word "sinking ship" ... might come into their heads don't you think?

Sir Norman: Well, I don't think it's remotely a sinking ship and...I mean, I just don't think the facts bear that interpretation because when you look at it, what has happened is that William has provided the best possible results as far as the local elections are concerned, for what...ever since 1992, so..

Nick Clarke: But I mean, his poll ratings are at a record low..

Sir Norman: Well...

Nick Clarke: ...levels, his own personal rating is almost invisible...surely those are pretty bad signs, aren't they?

Sir Norman: Well, come on. I don't think one can judge one's life by opinion polls, and what William is doing is providing the goods he's...and excellent - no-one has ever criticised his leadership in the House of Commons, he's excellent there and what he is also doing is winning elections. And I think that...slowly, step by step, we are recovering and I believe that he will...take us forward to victory.

Nick Clarke: I hear what you say about local elections but would you accept that the European Elections are very, very important for his future...

Sir Norman: No, well the European elections are important to the party and we must win as many seats as we can and I am sure that we are going to win more seats than

we won last time.

Nick Clarke: But well, he's made so much play of the European Elections, hasn't he...he's promoted this to a very important level beyond what many people in the party thought was wise so that if it doesn't go well, I would have thought his position would be seriously compromised.

Sir Norman: It isn't not going to go well. But I don't think there is any question at all about William Hague's leadership or his position.

TRANSCRIPT 5 (Today Programme 15/5)

PRO-TORY LAUNCH

Programme Script - Launch of the Pro-Euro Conservative Party

7.16

John Humphrys: We've scarcely digested one set of election results when we are off to the polls again but all of us, this time, for the Elections to the European Parliament - the Parties are about to launch their manifestos. The first of them is the pro- Euro Conservative Party founded by two MEPs who left the Tories because they didn't like their policy on Europe. One of them is Brendan Donnelly. Mr Donnelly, what is the point of your Party when if we want to vote for a pro-European Party we can vote for the Liberal Democrats or indeed some would say the Labour Party.

Brendan Donnelly: The trouble is that you can't vote for a Pro-European Conservative Party - our basic appeal is, we think, to present and former conservative voters who have been appalled by the Euro-sceptic drift over the past 5 - 10 years. We want to give them the opportunity to vote both Conservative and pro-European. We are looking forward to the European referendum that will be coming in a couple of years - we want to encourage the government to take a more leading role in shaping opinion on the subject of the Euro and we want to reassure them that there are Conservatives who will be sympathetic towards the idea of joining the Euro.

John Humphrys: A lot of people might say, well perhaps we agree with you but its a bit of a wasted vote: you are a tiny little party

Brendan Donnelly: Well under proportional representation every vote counts, that's the great thing advantage of this new system that we have. We only need in some of the bigger regions like the South-east - perhaps 8 or 9% of the vote perhaps even less and we would have a seat. It isn't like the Westminster system of first past the post. It is completely different system which favours the smaller parties.

John Humphrys: But what good can you do with one seat?

Bernard Donnelly: It will be an important symbol. It will be a voice coming from the pro-European Conservatives - over the past 10 years I'm afraid the Conservative Party, conservatism, has been hijacked by Euro-scepticism. There are a lot of pro-

European Conservatives around, potential and actual and I think it would be very good for our British political system that that should be registered.

John Humphrys: But all you do is split the Conservative vote and damage the Conservative Party - why don't you just go the whole hog and join the Lib Dems or something

Brendan Donnelly: Well I made the point, didn't I, that it is different under the proportional representation system - if for instance in the South-east we do get a seat it will be at the expense of the Hague-ite Conservatives. There will be no fewer Conservatives represented here in Strasbourg but there will be a pro-European Conservative which is an important and powerful message.

TRANSCRIPT 6 (Today 18/5)

James Naughtie: The Conservatives, as we have heard, are launching their campaign for the European Elections today, arguing that the Federalist tide must be stemmed and strengthening their own scepticism about the Single Currency but, of course, there is a breakaway Conservative group, formed principally by one dissident Tory MEP, which is arguing a vigorously pro European case - well how will these strands of Conservatism vie with each other for supporters? Well our political reporter, John Kampfner, reports now:

(report begins with a Stevens quote) "There are now a body of Conservatives every bit as convinced of the justice of our cause, prepared to fight for what we believe"

They are dismissed as disgruntled and disaffected. John Stevens' breakaway pro-Euro Conservatives says that they will do anything to change the Tory line on the Single Currency - that includes putting a picture of Kenneth Clarke on their Election mail shots,

John Stevens: "We're not expecting Ken to join us - we want him to be leader of the Conservative Party - you can't become leader of the Conservative Party if you leave the Conservative Party. But is a matter of fact that we are campaigning on his policies towards the Euro and on his vision of Conservatism"

John Kampfner: All of it awkward for the likes of Mr Clarke as they fight their corner within the party. David Davis, the Euro-sceptic former Europe Minister, clears the former Chancellor of any links with the rebels:

David Davis: "I suspect Ken Clarke or Michael Heseltine would be more irritated by that than even I am and, as is demonstrated by the fact that they're going to be in backing for our candidates, not his candidates, our candidates through the next few weeks."

John Kampfner: The parameters are getting clearer, a week ago William Hague outlined his vision of an à la carte Europe, with member states allowed to opt out of more policy areas. Whereas in the past there were attempts to play down the currency issue by party HQ, it is now being put centre stage. An election broadcast tonight is

aimed at winning over Euro-sceptic voters inside and outside the Tory Party. John Barker MP says the benefits of this strategy outweigh the risks:

John Barker: On this subject the people are with us consistently: around 60% of the public are against going into the single currency. Labour is unpopular on this subject. The Liberal Democrats are still more unpopular. William Hague will exploit this unpopularity.

John Kampfner: Mainstream pro-Euro Tories are relieved to see the official line - "not for the lifetime of this Parliament and the next" - which they can just about live with, hasn't been hardened in the manifesto. But they fear the campaign itself could see a shift in tone. Ian Taylor MP points to an article written this week by Mr Hague - pledging never to surrender control of the British economy to Brussels.

Ian Taylor: I am sure it was a typing error in the Sun Newspaper that led to one paragraph implying that. I don't think William Hague will say never because he realises that would put him outside the sensible mainstream politics.

John Kampfner: Few Tories believe that the breakaway group will make significant inroads but, given the febrile mood in the party, any splintering of support would damage Mr Hague. Some MPs are already playing the blame game - making sure that their side doesn't carry the can for a poor performance. Ian Taylor:

Ian Taylor: I don't envisage difficulties for myself - I shall support the Conservative cause in the European Elections. I think that if the leadership decided to make the campaigning extreme it would be difficult for the leadership.

John Kampfner: He and his allies are keeping their heads down before June 10th - they're looking beyond that to the launch of a new all party pro-Euro umbrella group. It's from that point that allegiances will be really put to the test.

James Naughtie: ...Michael Ancram the Tory Party Chairman joins us. Good morning Mr Ancram.

Just looking at the great battle for hearts and minds that John Kampfner was talking about there in this Euro Election we know that Mr Hague's manifesto is going to be more sceptical than it would have been six months ago, looking at a piece he wrote in The Sun the other day about the Single Currency he says, as long as I am leader I will never agree to surrender control of that economy, the British economy to Brussels. Is that him saying never?

Michael Anram: Well I don't find it very surprising to find the Conservative leader saying they won't surrender control of the British economy to Brussels ...

James Naughtie: But he means.. (interrupting)

Michael Ancram: No I think the ...

James Naughtie: (interrupting again) he thinks surrendering control means joining the Single European currency is he saying never? Or is he not saying never?

Michael Ancram: If you read what he says he restated our position quite firmly on the single currency, that is we will oppose it in our manifesto at the next election so that we can see its operation in bad times as well as good and to leave it in the end to the British Government to the British people to make the decision not Brussels - but he also made the statement, which I think is a very important statement, that he wouldn't preside over a Government that surrendered control over the British economy to Brussels. I think that the question you should be posing to the Liberals and Labour about their manifesto is would they surrender control of the economy to Brussels.

James Naughtie: We'll do just that but there are circumstances in which you would regard membership of the Single Currency as not surrendering control of the British economy.

Michael Ancram: My view of the Single Currency and the view of the Party is that we need to see it in bad times as well as good because we believe that if it is seen right through that type of economic cycle the people of this country will decide that its not in the interests of the British people to join it. In the end it is going to be the British people who make that decision. What we don't want to see is ourselves being bounced in to that decision as Tony Blair is doing at the moment. But this manifesto is not just about the Single Currency, its a manifesto which is a robust broad manifesto which sets out our vision for Europe and certainly one which we believe is very largely in tune with the instincts of the British people.

James Naughtie: You say that Mr Blair is going to bounce people and it will be a referendum of course they've got a choice of how they can vote. The bounce...

Michael Ancram: At the same time with the changeover plan what he is trying to do is to set up a situation where he comes to the British people and says, oh well you've really got no option.....

James Naughtie: (interrupts) If he's doing...

Michael Ancram: ...and that's something we think is intensely undemocratic and that's something we will be fighting against. This manifesto is a much broader manifesto, it's about the Europe we want to see.

James Naughtie: Let me just pick up something there - you talked about the PM bouncing us. He's bouncing us with the help of Mr Michael Heseltine and Mr Kenneth Clarke.

Michael Ancram: He's bouncing us in the sense that he's trying to create a sense of in.. inev..

James Naughtie: (interrupts) well he's getting their help.

Michael Ancram: ... inevitability. I am sure you will see both Mr Heseltine and Mr Clarke fighting to secure election of Conservative MEPs on this manifesto.

James Naughtie: Right well does that mean they believe in Mr Hague's vision of an à la carte Europe, which some people believe, given what he's said about a new power to allow countries to pick and chose which bits of legislation that they enforce is in fact a renegotiation of our terms of entry?

Michael Ancram: Well there's two aspects to the à la carte .. first of all the decision to what you want to take on what's called the Acquis Communautaire is relating to new countries joining the European Community trying to make it easier for new countries to come in. The second, which relates to existing states within Europe, talks about new legislation looking at new things that are going to come along where I think its right that countries have a right to decide whether they think those aspects of new legislation are going to benefit their countries - what we're looking for over all is a more flexible, a more comfortable, Europe which isn't going to be a Europe of coercion and integration but is going to be a Europe in which all the countries can prosper.

James Naughtie: Do you think that Chris Patten will be a good Commissioner in Brussels?

Michael Ancram: I haven't seen that confirmed yet and, but we made it clear at the time we are very relaxed about that he has all the qualities that would make a good Commissioner -

James Naughtie: But you didn't recommend him.

Michael Ancram: Well that's up to the Prime Minister - the Prime Minister makes the final decision and we will have to wait and see what the decision is.

James Naughtie: We will. Michael Ancram - thank you.

TRANSCRIPT 7 (World at One 1/6)

SCRAP CHANGE-OVER PLAN, SAYS HAGUE

Headlines: ... and Labour and the Conservatives have held news conferences attacking each other's Euro Policy this morning, I'll be joined by spokesmen from both sides to debate the issue live. The news is read by Brian Perkins.

Brian Perkins: The Conservative leader, William Hague, has called on the Government to scrap its national change-over plan to prepare for the Single European Currency and to abandon its commitment, in principal, to join the Euro. The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, has dismissed the call as irresponsible and accused the Tories of a negative, isolationist agenda. This report from our political correspondent Carol Walker:

Carol Walker: With nine days to go before the European Elections, the Single Currency has become the key battleground. William Hague said the Government should abandon its national change-over plan to prepare business and Government for future membership of the Euro. Mr Hague called it a 'national hand-over plan',

which would cost millions of pounds. British businesses, he said, should not have to pay it. He also called on Labour to drop its commitment, in principle, to join the Euro - and ditch what he called its 'rigid timetable for abolishing the pound'. The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, dismissed all this as 'deeply irresponsible', and accused the Tories of a negative, isolationist agenda. He said the Conservatives were moving closer to wanting to pull out of Europe.

Presenter: William Hague's theories are about to be put to the test. He has gambled on the growing scepticism of the British people about the Euro, and demanded that all preparations for Britain's entry should be abandoned, as he launched the Tory European Election manifesto today, Mr Hague said the Government should drop what he called its 'rigid timetable for abolishing the pound'. This hard-line reinforces the Party's insistence that we shouldn't even consider joining the Euro until the next Parliament-but-one, sometime after the year 2006. Voters will therefore have no trouble distinguishing that approach and the Government's policy of preparing the ground for a referendum after the next election. And Mr Hague sounded perfectly confident about the risks he was taking.

William Hague: It's time Tony Blair had the humility to see whether the Single Currency actually works before he commits Britain to joining it. So abandon the national hand-over plan, ditch the rigid timetable for entry, drop the commitment to join in principle regardless of the facts. These are my three simple challenges to Tony Blair, three common-sense challenges that British people want to see accepted.

Presenter: William Hague, setting out his stall, and renaming the national change-over Plan the 'national hand-over plan'; but at a Labour campaign briefing on the forthcoming elections the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, was unimpressed by what the Leader of the Opposition had had to say.

Robin Cook: William Hague's Tories are standing on a negative, isolationist agenda. They say they want to be in Europe, but their body-language, their rhetoric and increasingly the logic of their argument, tell a different story. They see Europe as a threat not an opportunity. Their obsession with vetoes and opt-outs betrays a defeatist attitude that would damage Britain.

Presenter: And In a moment we'll debate those competing view points. First though, another Party which has nailed its colours to a very prominent mast; the Liberal Democrats want a referendum and entry as soon as possible - I asked their finance spokesman, Vincent Cable, whether the Liberal Democrat Party might feel a little exposed.

Vincent Cable: I don't think we feel exposed, we're certainly distinctive, I mean, we've always argued that there needs to be an early referendum to establish the political basis for a decision on entry which we believe should be as soon as possible - and certainly within the next few years. Frankly we're not really sure where the other two Parties now are. The Government is giving the impression that it's in favour of entry without making a decision and procrastinates and there is quite a lot of uncertainty for British industry. The Conservatives are more Euro-sceptic but then there are many Conservatives who favour early entry. So we're I think, a little bit confused as to where they stand.

Presenter: You think that despite all the opinion polls and so on, at this minute people would vote 'yes' in a referendum - at this moment?

Vincent Cable: I think if there were properly argued, focused debate and all the arguments were set out dispassionately, I think we would win the case

Presenter: Vince Cable, for the Liberal Democrats. Well the Labour MEP, Alan Donnelly, led this morning's news conference with Robin Cook, and he's in our Westminster studio, as is Graham Mather, the Conservative MEP and Party spokesman on Single Currency in the European Parliament. Now, Graham Mather, this idea of cancelling out at the moment all plans to enter the Euro, isn't that a bit dramatic?

Graham Mather: Well I don't think so, because if you look at Tony Blair's body-language, he seems to be going into 'fast reverse' on this policy. It's clear that Gordon Brown, with his national change-over plan is trying to create a rigid timetable and bounce business into demanding we join the Euro quite quickly; but in the light of the market movements we're seeing this week and in the light of the British public's view on this shown in opinion polls, I think that's a very reckless policy and Tony Blair seems to be backing off - Brown says 'we want to join soon in the new Parliament', Blair says 'there's no timetable'. So I think William Hague is setting out a clear and convincing view which fits the mood of the British people.

Presenter: Well, Alan Donnelly, certainly The Sun newspaper thinks that Graham Mather's right and that Tony Blair is going very cool and may be himself thinking about putting off a referendum 'til the next Parliament-but-one. Is he?

Alan Donnelly: Well first of all let me say that the national change-over plan, which was announced in February came as a result of strong pressure from British industry; indeed at last year's CBI conference there were many demands for a national change-over from the Government. And I have to say that I think many business people will be shocked by what William Hague has had to say today, by this new extremism, where he's now edging towards the exit door from the European Union. As far as Labour is concerned, we have said, very pragmatically, that we will wait and see, we've set down five economic tests for whether or not the Single Currency is good for Britain. And then at the end of the day, of course, we have said we will have a referendum; now William Hague, of course, arrogantly is saying that he's not prepared to allow Britain a referendum on this issue. He has already ruled out membership 'til 2006 at the earliest.

Presenter: Right, but I mean, just to get this clear, The Sun is completely wrong when it thinks that Tony Blair's latest speeches - and they've been noted in various other quarters as well - have indicated a slight cooling, just a warning sign so that if things go badly wrong with the Euro, there is a retreat position.

Alan Donnelly: No, it's not a question of a retreat position, what the Prime Minister has repeatedly said is that we will do what is in the best interests of the country; and if the Euro demonstrates, when the time comes, that it is a success and that it's in Britain's interest, then it will be put to the British people to vote on, but demonstrably, we wouldn't recommend membership of a Single Currency if it wasn't

successful. Now that contrasts with the ideology of the Liberals who would take us in immediately, and the ideology of the Conservatives, which is under no circumstances would they take us in at all - which is just crazy to have these ideologies.

Presenter: But you haven't ruled out . . . we can't rule out the fact that, under Labour, if you win the next two elections, it might take that long to get to the point where we are ready to join the Euro.

Alan Donnelly: No, what we've said is there are five economic tests to see whether or not the British economy . . .

Presenter: And it might not happen for that long?

Alan Donnelly: No, I'm not saying that, what I'm saying is that we have economic tests which will decide whether or not we recommend it to the people, but it will be the people who will finally decide this matter - unlike the Conservatives, who are refusing to allow the British people a referendum on this issue.

Presenter: Graham Mather, first of all, you're refusing to listen to the British people and also you're really, you would actually, if you're honest with yourselves, like to get out of Europe altogether - that's the accusation.

Graham Mather: No, this is absolute nonsense. William Hague dealt with the first of those points very clearly at the press conference, and said we're not saying 'never' we're just looking at the facts pragmatically. It's very strange that Labour are saying we want to leave Europe, when their press briefing yesterday was saying we're too close to the Christian Democrats in the European Parliament, they can't have it both ways. What in fact is happening is some Labour politicians are losing their nerve against these very worrying facts from the markets. We're seeing the Euro, five months after its launch, approaching a crisis position. Its fall is now beginning to rattle the Central-Bankers, and politicians across Europe are beginning to take the wrong solutions, they're threatening to throw reserves to try to prop the Euro up - there's no wonder this is causing problems for New Labour.

Alan Donnelly: Graham, why is William Hague so much opposed to the idea of a referendum, why do you not want the British people to have the right to decide this question.

Graham Mather: I don't think that's the position at all.

Alan Donnelly: (attempting to interrupt) It is, it is.

Presenter: Answer the question if you would Graham Mather, then I'll stop Alan Donnelly interrupting you.

Graham Mather: William Hague isn't able to set a referendum, that is something which Tony Blair could set tomorrow, if he had the wish and the certainty and the guts to do so. So whenever people come to me and say, 'why isn't the Conservative Party supporting the launch of the Euro more speedily', the answer is, this is in the hands of the Government, and Tony Blair is pushing the referendum back, because he is quite rightly nervous about the economic and political consequences.

Presenter: A brief response to that, Alan Donnelly.

Alan Donnelly: Well, I'm asking Graham Mather, is he now saying he supports the idea of a referendum on the Single Currency?

Graham Mather: I think if we had a referendum on the Single Currency, either now or in the foreseeable future, it wouldn't pass . . .

Presenter: So why not have one, why not go for it, why not say you're in favour of it?

Graham Mather: Well no but, that is the reason that Tony Blair won't have one.

Alan Donnelly: No, it's arrogance Graham, William Hague has decided, already decided on behalf of the British people, that he won't allow us even to consider the matter. Labour's position is pragmatic and the people will decide at some point in the future.

Presenter: Alan Donnelly and Graham Mather thank you both very much indeed.

TRANSCRIPT 8 (World at One 7/6)

Nick Clarke: The Conservative Party has had an awkward few days of unhelpful publicity: today saw the latest of a number of reports of grass-roots unhappiness about the way the Party is funded. It's been claimed that a single benefactor, Michael Ashcroft, might be financing the party to the tune of four million pounds a year - and we'll examine that proposition in a moment. But the Tories are also having to respond to a suggestion in this morning's Independent, that some of their MEPs might try to link up with the Italian Fascist Party, Alliance Nationale. Euro-sceptics are said to have held meetings with the Italians, apparently dissatisfied with the present arrangement which is this: Conservatives sit in the European Parliament with Parties like Germany's Christian Democrats, in a group called the European People's Party. We contacted one Alliance MEP, Christina Muscadini, and she told us she had been talking to Euro-sceptic Tories, this is what she had to say:

Christina Muscadini: Last spring in London, Mr Fini, the Alliance Nationale's President and I had a meeting with some members of the British Conservative Party and also financial people. During this meeting we verified our programmes have much in common politically. In fact, Alliance Nationale is a party of Right-Centre that works for liberal democratic and social politics and it believes Europe must respect the national cultures of each country, and their economic autonomy. If the Conservative Party won't enter upon a new phase again, in the European Popular Party, Alliance Nationale is interested to work with the Conservative Party in the European Parliament.

Nick Clarke: Well those are the words of one of the MEPs for a party which is seen by many other people as being a direct successor of Mussolini. The Conservative's political opponents have seized upon the reports with some glee. Labour's Pauline

Green is leader of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, she's said that her Group and other democratic Groups would have 'no truck with the Alliance Nationale.'

Pauline Green: I think this is a clear indication that ever since William Hague became leader of the Conservative Party, it has moved systematically, step-by-step to the right. I believe that centre and moderate Conservatives concerned about Britain's future in Europe must look now with horror at where the Conservative Party in Europe is going.

Nick Clarke: And the Liberal Democrats are just as keen to exploit these latest reports. Their European Election Campaign Manager is Nick Harvey.

Nick Harvey: I don't think anyone should be surprised by this, we'll see after the Elections whether it's for real or not, but the Tories are going to be very uncomfortable bedfellows with the main European Conservative Party, who are pro-Euro and pro-federalism. It's the other wing of the Party who are in the ascendency, and it is they who will be the natural bedfellows for some of these right-wing groups across the Continent.

Nick Clarke: Well Edward Macmillan-Scott is leader of the Conservative MEPs now, he told me that he knew of no contact with the Alliance Nationale and that there was definitely to be no alliance.

Edward MacMillan-Scott: This is a Neo-Fascist party, which has become much more electable due to the plausibility of their leader but, of course, he's disguising a rather old-fashioned party below. And what they're trying to do is to seek respectability by going around Europe trying to find allies. They tried this in France with the Gaullists, but the Gaullists are actually going to join the European People's Party Group - which were associated with the new European Parliament; so that avenue's blocked off. But, as I say, any other connections, I'm not aware of them.

Nick Clarke: Right, so, and any member of your group of MEPs in the European Parliament, would you forbid them to speak to Miss Muscadini?

Edward MacMillan-Scott: I wouldn't forbid them to speak, but on the other hand there's no question of any link with them. I mean, we're intending to rejoin the EPP, which is the largest centre-right group in the European Parliament; it provides us with the best of both worlds, we both have the throw-weight in the European Parliament - but we're not bound by their manifestos or policies. There is of course, on the centre-right in Europe always some movement, as there is on the left.

Nick Clarke: But you would rule-out any member of your Party being in any alliance whatsoever with this group run by . . .

Edward MacMillan-Scott: Absolutely, all Conservative MEPs elected on June the tenth will sit together in the European Parliament.

Nick Clarke: Edward Macmillan-Scott. Now the other Tory problem arises from money worries. The reforming Charter Group, campaigning for greater democracy in

the Party had intensified its complaints about the way a handful of wealthy donors dominate Party funding. The business man and shipping magnate, Michael Ashcroft, alone is reported to be providing up to three hundred and sixty thousand pounds a month. Mr Ashcroft is Party Treasurer too - though he's never been elected to the post. Charter fear that Mr Ashcroft and a handful of others may soon own their Party. I'm joined on the line now by Andrew Lansley, Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party, he's in Westminster. Mr Lansley, can I just read one brief paragraph from Charter News? - These are some of your grass-roots people who are campaigning for reform - it says: 'it is now clear that the real Conservative Party i.e. the part with the power is a rich-men's club, they don't just pay for it they control it.' They're right aren't they?

Andrew Lansley: No, they're completely wrong. Let me give you a straightforward example: I am Vice-Chairman, with responsibility for policy development, and also with responsibility for these European Election campaigns. In neither respect has Michael Ashcroft, or the Treasurer's Department for which he is responsible, sought to influence either the policy of the Party or the way in which we run our European Elections, or the policy we pursue during our European Election campaign.

Nick Clarke: What this newspaper doesn't claim is that any particular type of policy or area of activity is controlled. What it says is, the potential is there, because you are funded by so few very wealthy people, who are not democratically accountable at all - 'cause Mr Ashcroft's not elected is he? The danger exists.

Andrew Lansley: Well, no Treasurer of the Conservative Party has been elected, the elected politicians in the Conservative Party are people like myself. The point of the story however is completely unfounded, because you refer to this three hundred and sixty thousand pounds a month, suggestion from Michael Ashcroft. I can tell you that that is a ludicrous exaggeration. I can also tell you that Michael Ashcroft and the Treasurers Department in the last year-and-a-half, have been making unprecedented measures to broaden the base of donors of the Conservative Party rather than for it to be narrower.

Nick Clarke: Well he became Treasurer . . .

Andrew Lansley: (speaking over him) And that, of course, is the basis upon which we will become a party that is not only owned by our members in terms of policy, but also a party that is open and accessible to people as donors.

Nick Clarke: Can you tell me what the correct figure is, if it isn't three hundred and sixty thousand pounds?

Andrew Lansley: Our figures ... We now publish who are our major donors in our accounts in the normal way ...

Nick Clarke: Exactly, so perhaps you could tell me now to help me?

Andrew Lansley: ... so obviously it's premature to do that before the accounts are published.

Nick Clarke: Well now the other problem here is that you say they're not elected because they never have been, but what Mr Ashcroft has done, apparently, is he has said it's too expensive to send round full accounts to all the constituencies, so the groups around the country, they're not getting that information. In other words, there's less and less information in this apparently 'open society' for them to work with.

Andrew Lansley: No, that's completely wrong. The accounts of the Conservative Party in the last few years have been produced on the same basis as if we were a Limited Company - so that that is available information in just the same way it would be in the public domain for a Limited Company: the accounts of the Conservative Party are public domain documents.

Nick Clarke: So this report is completely wrong again is it? It says here that Michael Ashcroft decided not to circulate Central Office accounts to constituencies as in the past, quotes, 'because it costs too much'. That's not correct?

Andrew Lansley: No, the accounts of the Conservative Party were circulated to the Party Conference, as I recall, the Party Conference, and indeed the Spring Conference of the Conservative Party is able to be attended by representatives of every constituency. So every constituency therefore has access to the accounts of the Party - there's nothing secret about the accounts of the Party at all.

Nick Clarke: Andrew Lansley, thank you very much indeed.

TRANSCRIPT 9 (sequence of interviews Today 8/6)

Transcript Sir Julian Critchley Today 8/6

6.50

Sue MacGregor: The former Conservative MP, Sir Julian Critchley, is among several Conservatives who have signed a letter to the Times expressing, as he puts it, his grave concern about the present tendency of the Conservative policy towards Europe. You feel that Mr Hague is well down the wrong track?

Sir Julian: Indeed I do. William Hague has moved the Conservative Party away from being a centre-moderate Party to becoming a right-wing, almost nationalist, Party. And he's done this despite an agreement with Michael Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke that he would not do it.

Sue MacGregor: Well 'right-wing, almost nationalist' is rather strong stuff. Are you saying that simple as someone who feels disaffected (laughs), if I could put it this way, a disaffected ex-member of Parliament?

Sir Julian: Perhaps I am disaffected, but I think you will see that the signatories and indeed myself belong to a different generation. We were the idealists about Europe, we believed in greater co-operation, greater integration with Europe - and indeed so did John Major until he was forced off that position by the right wing. What has been

so sad. since William Hague became leader, is that the anti-European stance has become strengthened and I think we are giving voice to very many Conservatives who feel that we are the idealist party on Europe, the party of the EU and the future, and that we must not be pushed into increased hostility

Sue MacGregor: When you say many Conservatives, Sir Julian, would it not be true to say that William Hague's policy of extreme concern to any further integration has the overwhelming support of the party?

Sir Julian: I think you must wait and see until what the result of the election will be on Thursday. If Hague does badly, the first thing that will happen is that the pro-European MPs will meet relatively secretly in a room in the House of Commons and decide as to what to do about it - I'm afraid

Sue MacGregor: What should they do about it?

Sir Julian: They should make more noise, they should stand up for the European ideal, they should not let the Ancrams and the Hagues of this world get away with it.

Sue MacGregor: How are you going to vote?

Sir Julian: I'm going to vote pro-European Party.

Sue MacGregor: So your message to William Hague later this morning is what, precisely?

Sir Julian: That if he doesn't want to go down as the shortest-lived Tory leader, he better change his tactics and the tone in his voice.

Transcript Of Today Programme 8am News 8/6.

Headlines: A group of former Conservative MPs and MEPs has attacked the Party's policy on Europe - they say they're finding it difficult to know how to vote on Thursday.

Brian Perkins: A number of former Conservative MPs and MEPs have written to The Times expressing what they call their 'grave concern' at the Party's policy towards Europe. They say they would prefer a more positive pro-European attitude and will find it difficult to decide how best to cast their vote for the European Parliament on Thursday. One of them, Sir Julian Crichtley, speaking on this programme, went further and said he would be voting for the break-away Pro-European Party. Sir Julian also had this criticism of the Tory Leader:

Sir Julian: William Hague has moved the Conservative Party away from being a centre-moderate Party, to becoming a right-wing, almost nationalist, Party. And he's done that despite an agreement with Michael Heseltine and Ken Clarke that he would not do it.

Brian Perkins: The main political parties contesting the Elections on Thursday are

trying to inject some excitement into the end of their campaigns. For Labour, Tony Blair will call for lower taxes on business and working families. At a Conservative rally in the West Midlands, William Hague and Michael Portillo will speak out against premature entry into the European Single Currency. And the Liberal Democrat Leader, Paddy Ashdown, will call for a constitution for Europe to set out clear limits on the powers of the EU.

Transcript of Today Programme Interview with William Hague. 8th June

James Naughtie: The Conservative campaign for the European Elections has one simple theme: as William Hague puts it in The Sun this morning, only the Conservatives want to keep the Pound safe. Well today he'll be getting the help of former Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, in his campaign. But of course the Tories have the small embarrassment of a break-away group of Conservatives who object to Mr Hague's policy on the Single Currency - John Stevens, who was a Tory MEP in the last European Parliament, is the leader of that group; he claims that Mr Hague is making a big mistake.

John Stevens: I think that both William Hague and Michael Portillo are making a grave error, in being so hostile to every aspect of our membership of the European Union. It's not just the Euro, it's the fact that they want a semi-detached status for this country, and I think that this is not at all in the national interest.

James Naughtie: Well, that was John Stevens who has bucked the Party line on this matter. Mr Hague is with us, good morning.

William Hague: Good morning.

James Naughtie: Let's just take head on this question of those in the Party who have taken a historic interest in European matters and regard themselves as pro-Europeans. We heard Julian Critchley, former MP, distinguished figure in your Party, earlier saying pretty well directly that he's going to vote for the Pro-European Party, and not for the official Conservative Candidate. What do you do about people who desert the Party, people who you are in a position to discipline, will you discipline them?

William Hague: Yes, but what I'm doing in this campaign is putting the case, putting the case for our policies. The Conservative Party in this Election stands for not transferring further rights and powers away from this country to Brussels, for cleaning up the European Commission, and for championing free-trade as the top priority of the European Union, both within the European Union and the rest of the world. And that is what the vast majority of the people of Britain believe in, and that is the great strength of our campaign in this Election, that we are speaking up for most of the people of Britain, against what really amounts to abuse from other parties - they're saying we've become extreme, or we've become right-wing, instead of them actually putting an argument, why don't they engage in the argument that we have been putting.

James Naughtie: Just to go back to the beginning of that answer, when I asked if you would discipline people who didn't vote for the official party list, you said, 'yes'.

What does that mean?

William Hague: Oh, it means as I've made clear many times, people in the Conservative Party who vote for other Parties will be expelled from the Conservative Party.

James Naughtie: So if Ian Gilmour, Lord Gilmour, for example, admits publicly for a Pro-European list, you'll say, that's it, you're out of the Party?

William Hague: Yes, people who vote for other Parties are out of the Party. We have a lot of fringe Parties in this Election and, incidentally, there are many fringe 'Alternative Labour', 'Renegade Labour', 'Break-away Socialist' and all those sort of things in the Election.

James Naughtie: Indeed

William Hague: We have fringe parties such as the UK Independence Party, which advocates total withdrawal for the United Kingdom - I think that would be a disaster for the United Kingdom. We have this so-called Pro-Euro Conservative Party, although it's largely made up from people from the Liberal and Labour Parties, that advocates charging into the Single Currency whatever the consequences, that would be a great mistake for this country. We represent the mainstream majority view of the people of this country who want to be in Europe, but not run by Europe, not taken over by Europe, and this is their chance in these Elections to vote for a Party that says that.

James Naughtie: But if they take the issue of the Single Currency, people will look at the Government and look at you, and they'll say, 'well the Government's not going to charge in regardless either', the Government has got a wait-and-see policy, and moreover they're getting from the Government exactly the same guarantee as you're offering: namely a referendum.

William Hague: No, they are getting a two-faced performance. (indistinct) . . .

William Hague: . . . no constitutional inhibitions to doing so, without any examination of the constitution . . .

James Naughtie: (interrupting) But only after a referendum where a majority of people would have to approve the change.

William Hague: In a referendum where they are trying to persuade people that it is inevitable and they have no choice, that really this is something that you have to go along with - that is the whole strategy of the Labour Party. I say people do have a choice, I say we are the fifth-largest economy in the world, and we can make a success of our own currency if we wish to do so.

James Naughtie: You argue that you are strong, and the Government is putting on, as you put it, a two-faced performance in Europe. Can you really claim and expect to be believed, that Britain's influence in Europe now is less, is weaker than it was in the last three years of John Major's Government?

William Hague: We are seeing influence that is either weak or that is not used.

James Naughtie: Compared with the great strength we showed in the last Major years in Europe?

William Hague: Yes, indeed, look at what has happened in the last few weeks, the Government went to the Cologne meeting a few weeks ago, trumpeting the fact that they would get some reprieve for Duty-Free. Duty-Free actually is being abolished. The Government caved in, they didn't get their way. They went to a meeting two weeks ago about the withholding tax, that could severely damage the City - the Chancellor caved in: the reports of the meeting in the French press said that 'the British point of view was absent at the meeting'. The Chancellor was present, but the British point of view was absent! Now this is either not having influence in Europe, or it is not using that influence.

James Naughtie: But the last time that your Party was in a position to exert considerable influence in Europe - namely when you were in Government - it was, by common consent, for three or four years, a disaster.

William Hague: Well remember what happened in the last Government, John Major went to Maastricht, and he negotiated the opt-out from the Single Currency, for this country. It is thanks to that negotiation and thanks to him, that we are able to choose, in this country, whether to join the Euro, and are not committed by law, by treaty, to joining it. Now that is the very constructive use of influence in the European Union, and this Government, instead of doing things like that and defending the interests of this country, talk tough when they're here, and they cave-in in every European negotiation.

James Naughtie: Can you give an absolute guarantee that none of your MEPs - those who are elected and go to Strasbourg - will make common cause with Italian Fascists?

William Hague: Yes, absolutely. I've seen those stories, they have no foundation whatsoever.

James Naughtie: So they shouldn't even talk to them?

William Hague: Unfortunately some of those people will be sitting in the same Parliament, so no-one can guarantee not ever having a conversation with them.

James Naughtie: But not in the same Group? Not in the same Group?

William Hague: But they are not going to be. Conservative MEPs are not going to be allied or joining in any way Italian Neo-Fascist Parties - it's another example of these stories that have been produced to attack the Conservative Party in this Election, after a very constructive and clear and confident campaign, the best our opponents can do is that sort of stuff, that we're Neo-Fascists.

James Naughtie: Well it's been reported this morning, on the subject of campaigning and dirty-tricks and all the rest of it, that people in your Party are rather upset because

Labour are going to use a picture of you in your famous baseball cap in their party broadcast tonight - and that's regarded as not being very fair. Does that mean that you admit that the baseball cap was a mistake?

William Hague: (laughing) It doesn't trouble me in the least, if the Labour Party want to persuade the public that they should abolish the Pound, they're going to have to find a better argument than looking at my baseball cap.

James Naughtie: Do you still have it, as a matter of interest?

William Hague: I think it's been auctioned off several times, it's in huge copies of it... or in huge amounts at auctions around the country - I even sign them!

James Naughtie: So you've got a wardrobe full of them?

William Hague: I'll send one to the Labour Party to congratulate them on resurrecting it, with a note saying if you really want to win Elections and win votes in this Election, you're going to have to find some arguments, not just parade a baseball cap.

James Naughtie: So these days you give them away, you don't wear them, William Hague, thank you very much indeed.

Transcript *Today* Sir Nicholas Scott and Sir James Spicer 8/6

8.52pm

James Naughtie: We talked to William Hague earlier about the European Elections. He made his views very plain about what he thinks about those Conservatives who don't accept his line on the Single Currency and, indeed, his attitude to the way this country should co-operate with the other countries of the European Union. One the line now if the former Conservative MP for Chelsea, Sir Nicholas Scott, very much associated, Sir Nicholas, with what we call, I suppose the pro-European wing of the party. You know what the arguments are. What are you going to do on Thursday?

Sir Nicholas Scott: Well that is the problem, isn't it. I suppose lots of people will be, particularly those who take my view, not wishing to damage the Conservative Party as a whole, but actually taking a pro-European line. And I think that's going to put a lot of people in a dilemma, and I think I shall face that dilemma right up to the cross I put on my voting paper on Thursday.

James Naughtie: You mean a lot of people who take your view will be tempted to vote for the Pro-European slate, the breakaway slate of Conservatives?

Sir Nicholas: That's a decision I've got to make on Thursday. I don't want to do anything that is going to damage the Conservative Party as a whole. I'm sorry that the leadership of the Conservative Party has taken the view that it has, and I'm going to have to balance that very carefully when I vote.

James Naughtie: I don't know whether you are aware that Mr Hague said ... that anyone who did vote for the Pro-Europe Tories, who have broken away, would face expulsion from the Party,

Sir Nicholas: Well again, that's a decision I will have to make at the last minute and no doubt Mr Hague will make his mind up about what he's going to do.

James Naughtie: But you think that there are some people who will put that principle above technical membership of the Party?

Sir Nicholas: Well, I think, look basically, I have been for 30 years a pro-European, supported the issue there quite clearly, and people have understood my view in terms of the position of myself and a whole range of other people who want to be able, without damaging the Conservative Party as a whole, and I don't think they should be, those who take that view should not feel that they are damaging the Conservative Party in some way...but express the view that a number of us have, they don't want to suddenly turn our backs on the movements towards Europe which we have taken for a couple of decades at least.

James Naughtie: I'm joined now by another veteran Conservative ... Sir James Spicer, former Tory whip and someone who I think feels quite strongly about those who are protesting about the Party line. Sir James, what do you think about this argy-bargy going on just before the Election. After all, it's one that's being going on, one way or another, for 30 years in the Party, isn't it?

Sir James Spicer: Yes it has, but if I look back to 1971, when the late Tufton Beamish and Geoffrey Rippon and I founded the Conservative for Europe group, we were staunch Europeans and we fought the European cause. But we were fighting for a different Europe then. We were fighting for a Europe that would bring us closer together in a EU economy and a community. That was fine. It was fine to go on beyond that. But some of the steps we are now being invited to take I think would be an anathema and, obviously, I can't speak for Tufton, but I know what I feel, and on Thursday I shall be supporting absolutely strongly that has been taken by William Hague. And by his team. That doesn't make me anti-European or a Euro-sceptic.

James Naughtie: You will have seen the letter to *The Times*, signed by Julian Critchley and many of your former colleagues in the Commons. What do you make of it?

Sir James: I'm not very impressed, frankly. Obviously, I don't want to talk about personalities, but I was the Chief Whip of our group in the EU Parliament and I wouldn't rate very highly some of them. And of course the timing of this is quite deliberate to damage the Conservative Party. And these are the people who during the dark days when John Major was fighting hard to hold our Party together with virtually no majority, a good many of them just as the Euro-sceptics from the other side were on the attack, they were sniping away at him - now they are acting in the same vein with William Hague. What William said this morning was absolutely spot on and every decent Conservative ought to be voting Conservative on Thursday.

Transcript Lead item 9am News Today - Sir Julian Critchley 8/6

Reader: The Conservative leader, William Hague, has said he will expel any Party member who votes against the Tories in Thursday's European Elections. His warning comes after a number of former MPs and MEPs expressed concern about Mr Hague's policy on Europe, saying they would find it difficult to decide how to cast their votes. Here's John Kampfner.

John Kampfner: William Hague was trying to make light of a letter to *The Times* this morning from a number of former Conservative MPs and MEPs. They expressed, what they called, grave concern at the increasingly hostile approach that the Conservative leadership has adopted towards the Euro, warning that they were finding it difficult to know how to vote. One of them, Sir Julian Critchley, went further. He told the Today programme that he would vote for, what he called, a Pro-Europe Party. However, Mr Hague said he had positioned the Conservatives to represent, what he called, the majority of mainstream voters. Mr Hague will be joined at a pre-Election rally in Birmingham by the Euro-sceptic former defence secretary, Michael Portillo.

TRANSCRIPT 10 (PM 14/6)

Newsreader: So will last night's Election success prove a turning point for the Tories? Certainly it's their best result since the General Election of 1992. But the victory may prove yet to be a Pyrrhic one and serve only to re-open splits over Europe. The position of Mr Hague himself may be secure, but as our political correspondent, Laura Trevelyan, reports, the Tories are not out of the woods yet.

Laura Trevelyan: In draughty sports halls across the UK last night, jubilant Conservatives congratulated each other on the scale of their success, and the rejoicing is continuing today. We've been written off as useless and irrelevant, but now we're back, confided one Tory strategist. Certain that their Euro-sceptic message on the Single Currency struck a chord with voters, the Party leadership is now looking for other issues with which to repeat the trick.

But is the Tory victory as tremendous as all that? Not according to the Conservative MP, Ian Taylor, a confirmed Europhile who resigned from the Conservative front bench over Mr Hague's policy over the Euro.

Ian Taylor: I think that the issue, if it's extended to the General Election, has got some warning signals in it. Only one in ten people bothered to turn out and support the Conservatives, which means that nine out of ten were unconvinced, and it's really a battle for the hearts and minds of the nine out of ten now needs to start.

Laura Trevelyan: It seems that the Euro Election results has done nothing to end the row in the Conservative Party over Europe, rather it has entrenched existing divisions. The pro-Europeans concede nothing, insisting that the large Tory turnout consisted of the Tory activists and not the general public. Meanwhile, the Euro-sceptic right are now egging their leader on to take drastic steps against the pro-Europeans, who they

regard as the enemy within. Although most Tory MPs say the mutterings about Mr Hague's leadership have now been silenced, the grandest of the pro-Europe Tories was not so charitable about his leader when speaking on the World at One today.

Michael Heseltine: I don't think his position was under any great threat, because I couldn't see where the threat was coming from. It's only when Michael Portillo comes back into the House of Commons that William will have to watch his back.

Laura Trevelyan: And quite apart from Europe and the leadership, other problems remain for Mr Hague. There's the matter of Party financing for instance. There's widespread unease in Conservative circles about the role of Michael Ashcroft, the millionaire Party Treasurer. Many Tories are uncomfortable about one man effectively bank-rolling the Party and want to see change. John Stafford is the chairman of the campaign for Conservative Party democracy.

John Stafford: There's been a huge fuss but it's been very subdued in the sense we're pretty well aware that Michael Ashcroft is helping the Party financially and we are also aware of the dire financial position of the Party. So you are caught in a very delicate dilemma whether you should carry on with this or find a solution. The other solution is to increase the membership. And you only do that by giving members more democratic rights.

Laura Trevelyan: With Party organisation and splits over Europe bubbling under, not even the most starry-eyed Tory truly believes that the European result can be translated into a General Election victory. This was a one issue contest, fought on our turf, admitted a central office official. And we won't be as lucky again.

TRANSCRIPT 11

John Humphrys, interviewing Nigel Farage of the UK Independence Party links it to the British National Party, and says leaving Europe would be impossible (Today, May 20)

John Humphrys: The UK Independence Party is launching its manifesto for the European elections today. The only one saying that Britain should withdraw from Europe entirely. The party Chairman is **Nigel Farage**. Good morning to you.

Nigel Farage: Good morning

John Humphrys: The thing that puzzles me about this is that you want to get us out of Europe altogether but you are standing for the European parliament and you will take seats if you win any in the European parliament - well that's a bit funny isn't it? (JH at his most quizzical)

Nigel Farage: Yes we will take seats in that Parliament and we will link arms with the other moderate groups from the other European countries who feel exactly the same as we do and we will go there and we will find out what information we can about what is going on. We will expose further the frauds and corruption that is taking place with in the EU. We will bring that back to this country and when we

have elected representatives we will have a voice in the media. At the moment we've got 50% of the country that agrees with the UK Independence Party's point of view ...

John Humphrys: Oh, well come on - if that was the case you'd have had an awful lot of votes last time around wouldn't you?

Nigel Farage: Well no, I'm afraid that's not the case - I mean 46% of people in recent MORI polls said they wanted to leave the EU immediately, now it takes time for political parties to get credibility and it's taken the UKIP several years to get to this position.

John Humphrys: And once you've got a chance to get it - you will as your former leader said jump on the gravy train...

Nigel Farage: No that is not the case at all - every one of our candidates has signed a declaration that they will take themselves only genuine expenses allowances. All of that will have to be receipted and we will put our expenses up for annual inspection by producing an audit - excess expenses that we have and there will be excess expenses because they will force us to take money that we don't really need - will all be given to a fund which we are going to establish to help the legal expenses of victims of the European Union.

John Humphrys: Does it worry you that you have been singled out for praise - you particularly, incidentally - by the British National Party in their newsletter, Spearhead?

Nigel Farage: Well, I haven't read the BNP newsletter Spearhead and all I would say about that is that we have no links or associations with the BNP whatsoever. We are an alliance of people from the right, from the centre and from the left - all we want is our country back.

John Humphrys: But of course it can't happen can it - I mean the fact is that we are tied by innumerable treaties and it is literally unthinkable isn't it?

Nigel Farage: No its not unthinkable - you may think its unthinkable but a growing number..

John Humphrys: Interrupts well I think in legal terms you know the turmoil that would be created is just, well its just extraordinary... (voice tails off)

Nigel Farage: I don't think any turmoil would be created look we've got countries like Norway, countries like Switzerland..

John Humphrys (interrupt) turmoil

Nigel Farage: ...quite happily with France and Italy without being members of the European Union. All I am saying is that we want to divorce ourselves amicably from the whole process of the European Union and go back to the free trading agreement that the British people thought it was going to be in the first place.

John Humphrys: (seemingly sarcastic) So if you won a seat you'd only be in it for a very short time would you?

Nigel Farage: Hopefully, it will be the shortest job that I have ever had in my life - hopefully we will be so successful we'll hasten the day at which Britain does leave the European Union

John Humphrys: Nigel Farage thanks very much.

Note 1

Political balance

The nature and attainment of political balance is, of course, a topic of constant controversy. During the period of this survey, for example, the BBC was accused on a number of occasions of imbalance over the coverage of GM foods (in the treatment of Jack Cunningham on the Today programme as one instance).

“Imbalance” is easier to perceive than to prove - the nature of broadcasting, as opposed to the written word, is that the grasp of what it said is transitory, and what lingers is often different from what is actually said. Individuals may notice and remember a view that appeared biased without remembering the (countering) context in which it was expressed.

For this reason, all the key items relating to European coverage have been transcribed, so that analysis is invariably based on what was actually said, along with the full context of consideration and delivery. Nuances of delivery, the tone of a question and in the choice of images chosen to illustrate a point, have also been taken into account.

Analysis has also been carried out, not just in relation to individual items, but to the news agenda as a whole, ensuring that the total context was taken into account - thus avoiding petty and minor considerations.

Balance itself, of course, is dependent on the mid-point taken for analysis. During the period of this exercise, for example, the Serb Government's view of balance in the reporting of the Kosovo War, would have been very different from that of a supporter of Nato.

For the purpose of the European elections, “neutral” has been chosen as being somewhere between the main policy points being contended in the election: loosely pro-pound and less integration v. pro-Euro and greater integration.

Many commentators - including the BBC's Robin Oakley (9pm Television News 26/5) - noted that in this Election there was a clear choice facing electors in the Conservative and Labour visions for Europe.

In more detail, the central points of contention, as defined by the Party manifestos,

and longer interviews on television were:

Labour fought on making the most of, and further developing, the UK's membership of the EU, holding a referendum on membership of the Euro when the time was right, probably soon after the next general election, and further integration where it made sense.

Conservatives fought on a platform of In Europe But Not Run by Europe: with a firm commitment that Britain would not join the Euro either in this, or for the next Parliament; that further integration in areas such as taxation and defence and moves towards federalism should be resisted.

Liberal Democrats wanted greater integration with Europe, the rooting out of corruption, moves towards a common defence policy (though not a European army) and wanted a referendum on joining the Euro at the earliest opportunity - before the next Election.

Of the minority Parties, the SNP and Plaid Cymru both wanted closer integration with Europe and early joining of the Euro, as did the breakaway Pro-Euro Conservative Party (supported by just two named MEPs).

The UK Independence Party, Green Party, Natural Law Party, Socialist Party and BNP all wanted either to leave the Union or to reduce ties. None wanted to join the Euro.

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