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Prime Minister should not end UK's control over the economy, law and order or foreign policy, says Politeia's next pamphlet.

Along with all his other troubles, Mr Blair faces a major difficulty with the European Constitution, which he wants Britain to sign. But why should the UK do so? The draft is now ready and the idea is that the Prime Minister will sign in the coming year. But if he does, the laws of this country and the major decisions affecting the UK will no longer be made in Westminster. Instead, responsibility will go to the EU and Britain will become part of a federal Europe. The voters of this country would lose the power to hold their politicians to account at a general election for the way they have governed Britain.

Though the Labour Government is anxious to sign, and has suggested the Constitution is no more than a tidying up exercise, or that we can safely leave future negotiations in their hands, it is whistling in the dark. Under the EU Constitution, Britain would cease to be a sovereign power. This has now become clear as detailed evidence emerges. David Heathcoat-Amory MP, who has been a delegate to the EU Convention on the Future of Europe, explains in Politeia's summer address, *The EU Constitution: What it Means for Me*, what is at stake. Britain, he says will lose its sovereign powers. He shows how signing the Constitution would affect three vital areas of the economy, foreign and defence policy, and home affairs and legal matters.

First, economic affairs. Few deny that the EU economic model of high tax, regulation and high employment costs has taken its toll on countries in the Eurozone where there is low growth and employment, and where the conditions of the Eurozone make it even more difficult to change course. The UK has remained outside the Euro. But the European Constitution would impose the same economic policy on all member states, and the Union would have powers to 'ensure coordination of [the] economic policies'. This will lead to the coordination of tax and spending, pensions, employment laws and social security systems by the Union. Britain will also be forced to share other powers such as those on transport, the environment and energy. Countries will be obliged to promote the stated objects of the Union – and the UK would be acting illegally if it fails to do so. And, the author explains, there will be even more red tape as other major decisions are taken by majority voting, and are no longer unanimous: there will be 'a green light for more Union legislation, adding to the...burden of accumulated regulations' already running at 97,000 pages.

In the criminal justice system, Britain, alone with Ireland, has a system of Common Law, habeas corpus, trial by jury and distinct rules of evidence governing such trials. But, as the author explains, under the European Constitution 'such procedures [will be] harmonised across the Union, by majority voting' and the most likely result will be that Britain will 'have to adopt procedures appropriate for the inquisitorial system on the continent...[and] amend [or] ...even abolish, our jury trial system built up over centuries'. Other powers too will be harmonised, such as those covering cross border and organised crime.

In foreign policy, Britain's historic role as a sovereign power would end. In place of the present arrangements of the 1992 treaty where foreign and security policy was to be made outside the Community by member states (the 'pillared' structure), such powers are to go to the Union. This means that foreign policy and the decisions over peace and war will no longer belong to the UK. Though Mr Blair insists that he will fight for them, the die has already been cast for the Constitution insists that 'Member States shall actively and unreservedly support the Union's common foreign and security policy...and shall comply with the acts adopted by the Union in this area'.

The author explains that the government is out on a limb in thinking that it can change things when the final talks start in Rome in October. Though the Foreign Office claims ‘We are... “about to start the second half of the match”’, the evidence is that while you can win some small concessions or tactical victories, the strategic limits have already been set and are not for negotiation. Instead the pamphlet urges that there must be a referendum on the European Constitution for such changes need the consent of the people. They must have the chance to be the judge of their own rights.

***The EU Constitution: What it Means for Me* is published by Politeia, 22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QP, Thursday 31st July 2003.**