

The EU, Human Stem Cells, And Poodles

The European Union has **decided** to restrict its funding of human stem cell research to experiments that do not involve the destruction of fertilised eggs.

Some members of the EU are devoutly Catholic countries. Their people have irrational religious objections to that sort of research. So why should they fund it? Indeed, but now the EU will take money in the form of taxation from Britain (which is a major net contributor to the EU budget), and will forbid its use for good research that most Britons approve of.

Part of the problem with a system that requires politicians from many different countries to pool their spending is that they have to compromise on issues where their constituents disagree. Within the evolved democratic political tradition of a single nation, such compromises take place too, but they then form part of a political process in which they are discussed, dissected, reviewed, and generally implemented in such a way that their proponents are held responsible for their outcomes, and the policies can be amended or abandoned in response to criticism, and so progress can be made. The EU has no such process. indeed, there is no such thing as the European political process at all, or a European political party, or a European national debate on anything. Yet genuine political accountability depends on the existence of such processes, which is why the European Parliament is not only a meaningless, formal imitation of a democratic institution but would remain so if it were (disastrously) given significant legislative powers. Still less accountable are the European Commissioners, who are insulated by layer upon layer of institutional defences against the slightest danger that they could be held to basic standards of rationality.

At the moment, the British press and 'opinion makers' have taken to shrieking 'poodle!' whenever the Prime Minister does not achieve the full reversal of a major US foreign policy in deference to British domestic opinion. Yet somehow the EU invariably gets a pass when it materially overrules, undermines and thwarts the British people's means of deciding on their own governance inside Britain.

If Britain cannot reform the EU it should leave it.

That may be precisely the best approach for Britain. Britain should be able to access the best of both worlds if it's smart. Blair, with all of his shortcomings, is smart, and he's done an great job overall. Brown isn't looking to pull out of the EU - or he doesn't seem willing to use the threat of pulling out as a chip. By the way, I don't know how many people saw the Bush-Blair press conference. I thought Blair's performance was masterfull. But we're a bit spoiled here.

by **Michael Bacon** on Sat, 07/29/2006 - 20:47 | [reply](#)
