

# Lord Who??

Never heard of him. Who is he? This would have been most people's reaction to the news that David Cameron has nominated Lord Jonathan Hill as the next UK Commissioner. In other member states, candidates include former foreign ministers, finance ministers and even prime ministers – figures very much in the public eye. For the second time in a row, we are sending a nonentity, for Lord Hill is following in the footsteps of the equally obscure Baroness Ashton. Still, it does represent a change of policy from the days when the post of European Commissioner was seen as a dumping ground – a way of removing embarrassing failures like Neil Kinnock or Peter Mandelson from the domestic political scene.

Of course, it was always going to be too much to hope that, following his stand against Jean-Claude Juncker, David Cameron was going to pick a committed eurosceptic for the post. How about Lord Lawson? He is, after all, in the same party as the Prime Minister and he would have had great fun with the energy portfolio. Sadly, even allowing for his advancing years, he probably wouldn't have wanted the job anyway. The eurosceptic former environment secretary Owen Patterson was tipped in some sections of the media as being in the frame. Unfortunately, having been sacked from the cabinet, he was never going to be in with a chance.

Coming down to earth, much as one would have wished for a eurosceptic to put the cat among the pigeons in the Commission, it was never going to happen. Even if David Cameron had wanted to do so, the European Parliament has the power of veto and having blocked Italy's nominee Rocco Buttiglione 10 years ago merely for his support for traditional marriage, the likelihood of a convinced eurosceptic surviving a mauling from the federalist rottweilers in the EPP and socialist groups would have been precisely zero. Furthermore, could a eurosceptic take the

Commissioner's oath with a clear conscience? Could anyone who supports the sovereignty of the nation state say "I do solemnly undertake: to be completely independent in the performance of my duties, in the general interest of the Communities; in the performance of these duties, neither to seek nor to take instructions from any government or from any other body"?

So we were inevitably going to end up sending a europhile to Brussels. I say "we" but, of course, we, the electorate, never had a say. We never chose this man and unquestionable wouldn't have chosen him if we had a choice. The whole procedure for selecting Commissioners epitomises the democratic deficit at the heart of the EU

So who is Lord Hill anyway? He doesn't have a particularly long entry in Wikipedia, suggesting he hasn't made much of a splash politically so far. He worked as a special advisor to Kenneth Clarke and then served as a political advisor to John Major in 1992-4, the years of the Maastricht rebellion and its aftermath. He was appointed leader of the Conservatives in the House of Lords by David Cameron 18 months ago. Not much else of relevance in Wikipedia and a search on the internet to find out more about him didn't come out with very much. Unsurprisingly, given his links with Ken Clarke, he is a supporter of our EU membership. "I..believe that the UK's interests are best served by playing a leading role in the EU," he is quoted as saying. He claimed that one of the Commission's challenges would be "how to strengthen public support in many countries for the European Union."

Well, if that it is desire, the very fact that he has been shoe-horned into his post without any popular mandate will hardly endear either the EU or the man himself to his fellow-countrymen. If any further confirmation that Lord Hill is bad news, surely his endorsement by Nick Clegg is sufficient:- "Lord Hill's experience and the respect he commands across all parties makes him the right candidate to be the UK's next

European Commissioner.”

Lord Hill said, “In five years’ time, when the next European elections take place, I want to be able to say to people across Europe – including Britain – that the European Commission has heeded their concerns and changed the EU for the better.” Some hope. Let us hope that by the time those elections take place, we are on our way out and this nonentity is out of a job.