

## [Coalition neuters parliamentary EU scrutiny?](#) [1]

Written by [Tim Ambler](#) [2] | Monday 5 July 2010



In opposition, the Tories were keen to invigorate the House of Commons EU Scrutiny Committee, both to restore legislative authority to the House and to ensure that proposed new EU legislation was properly challenged. Successive governments hitherto have ensured that the Scrutiny Committee never came to any conclusions, still less held the Executive or the EU to account.

Before the election, the Tories promised to enable the Committee to do what it is supposed to do. A pamphlet co-authored by Theresa May spelt out what was required. In February, David Cameron made much the same point: ?And one of the biggest constitutional changes in our history - our membership of the European Union - has practically passed Parliament by. We are hopeless, totally hopeless, at scrutinising the European legislation, regulation and spending that affects our country.?

What a difference an election day makes! All other select committees are having chairmen chosen democratically by back benchers ? the sole exception is the EU Scrutiny Committee. David Cameron and the Chief Whip have decided that Ministers will vote too.

Has the Executive woken up to the threat of having an EU Scrutiny Committee that does its job? The government?s independence and room for negotiation in Brussels would be certainly be compromised ? not least their current freedom to wave through regulations in the spirit of European co-operation, even when they are bad for Britain. With 30 new Directives on the way now, this is a very pertinent topic. It is vital that the Committee has a chairman who will make sure that EU matters receive proper Parliamentary attention.

It is worth remembering that EU regulations burden British industry twice as much as their Whitehall counterparts. On that basis, they should get twice as much attention. But one gets the impression that the Government, briefed by their civil service mandarins of course, would rather bury all EU matter in the sand. It would be much better if David Cameron followed through on what he said in opposition.

*Tim Ambler is a Fellow of the Adam Smith Institute and an Honorary Research Fellow at the London Business School. For a review of the EU Scrutiny Committee?s work see [Ambler and Chittenden \(2009\), Worlds Apart: The EU and British Regulatory Systems](#)<sup>[3]</sup>, British Chambers of Commerce.*

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