

THE IRISH REFERENDUM ON THE NICE TREATY

I was disappointed, in the context of understanding that the Nice Treaty, with its many imperfections, was still a political condition sine qua non. Without this, the enlargement could not happen. But I had the privileged position to be the first and only ever Irish President of the European Parliament at that time, so I asked David Martin, who was the senior among the Vice-Presidents, for a certain period actually to ensure that my function would be carried on by others. For a period of four or five weeks I did not come to the institutions. I put a bus on the road in Ireland. I filled the bus every day with volunteers. I went up and down the country. I got the Prime Minister to launch the campaign and we went after that with enormous determination, assisted by wonderful young people from civil society organisations. And in the end we won. There were many messages, but a key message that I carried was that we had found our space and our place inside this family in Europe, this family of nations, this European Union idea, and that it would be wrong historically, and wrong morally, to appear to close the door to others.