

I'm tired of hearing about fox-hunting. Every newspaper I picked up, every news bulletin I watched over the weekend was filled with pictures of people in red jackets, trying to put a brave face on their defeat.

And that is what this debate has been about for years - people. The fox barely comes into it. The media didn't turn out in droves to check that foxes weren't being torn to pieces by hounds. They wanted to see if the hunters and the hunt saboteurs would tear each other apart - and some of them got what they wanted.

I am against hunting, but I have sympathy for the hunters. Hunting has been the glue that helps to keep some rural communities together. It is about meeting your friends on a clear winter's morning, galloping through beautiful countryside and returning home pleasantly aching to tell tales about the one that got away. The dot on the horizon - which is all many hunters see of the fox - barely comes into it. Nonetheless it is there and, if it has to be killed, then it should be done in the most humane way possible. How to achieve that is open to debate - and that is what we have had ad infinitum.

It's been decided that death should be by the bullet, not hound. The snap of a hound's jaw may be traditional, but we don't live in the past. We evolve and so do our pastimes. Hunters should accept that now - or face the extinction of a complete ban.

While we in Britain fixate on pastime that involves only a few thousand people and even fewer foxes, the Spanish have been casting their vote on a document that could subtly alter all of our lives in countless ways, depending on your point of view - of course.

Seventy-nine per cent of voters were in favour of the EU constitution, an overwhelming majority - except that less than half the electorate bothered to cast a ballot. This was expected. The decision in favour of the constitution was reckoned to be a foregone conclusion. So some people may have decided not to bother, but an equally likely explanation is that people simply didn't have a clue on the issue. This is a strong contender to explain the low turn-out six per cent of the people who made it to the polling booth, ticked the "Don't know" box.

Our government needs to learn from this. If Tony Blair wants a genuine mandate to sign this treaty, he has to repeat the effort that went into the great GM debate - publicly-funded meetings, workshops, information packs and websites. We need this level of activity if people are to get to grips with this issue and I think people will try to understand what it means because of the ingrained suspicion that the EU wastes loads of money and churns out crazy dictates. Unfortunately, we are unlikely to get it. The GM debate didn't produce the outcome the government wanted. They won't risk it with the constitution.