



Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
Alliance des Démocrates et des Libéraux pour l'Europe
from Bill Newton Dunn MEP

ENORMOUS CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD

Bill's Bulletin for the East Midlands

May I send you a regular report by email?

If you would like to receive a 'report back' from me, by email or occasionally by post (because large numbers makes that very expensive), please reply to me

- either by email to bill.newtondunn@europarl.europa.eu

- or by post to me at 10 Church Lane, Navenby, Lincoln LN5 0EG

As one of the MEPs who was elected to represent you and the other three and a half million people in the East Midlands, in the European Parliament in Brussels, I would like to be able to report back to you regularly.

About the European Parliament

The European Parliament is the forum for the public's representatives, directly elected from all 27 member states of the EU, to make EU laws, control EU decisions, put questions, and debate problems and solutions and new ideas.

It is fully open and democratic. Meetings in the parliament are web-streamed as they take place. You can watch on EuroParlTV at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>

About the European Union

The EU is now 27 member states, with a combined population around 500 million people. A full list of the 27 is at <http://europa.eu/about-eu/member-countries/>

The EU makes our laws for Agriculture, Trade, Customs, and the cross-border aspects of the Environment, Transport, Development Aid, and more.

The EU gives each one of us guaranteed rights to travel, live, work, retire, and vote in any of the 27 member states without needing police permits or visas.

Who makes EU laws?

Power is shared between three separate bodies. They are separate so that there are checks and balances, and nobody has full power on their own.

1. The European Parliament is the democratic body which represents the public. Its website address is www.europarl.europa.eu

2. The Commission (<http://ec.europa.eu/>) is the day-to-day executive body. It receives an annual budget and its powers are delegated to it by the two legislative bodies - the Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

3. The Council of Ministers (<http://consilium.europa.eu/>) is made up of one minister from each of the 27 member states. Who is there each day depends on what their agenda is. The Council rarely meets in public, although it promised to do so in the Lisbon Treaty. Ministers also fail to publish Minutes afterwards.

Disputes are adjudicated by the EU's supreme court, the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Its website is <http://curia.europa.eu/>

This is not to be confused with the European Court on Human Rights at Strasbourg <http://www.echr.coe.int/echr/> which adjudicates and enforces human rights for 46 countries including the EU 27 and Turkey, Russia, and others.

About my work as your MEP
In the East Midlands, I travel around the region to wherever I am invited - public events, schools, agricultural shows, etc, as well as visiting individual



constituents and businesses.

In the parliament in Brussels, there is full information about the work I do, both at my own website <http://www.newtondunn.com/> and also at my page on the European Parliament's website, at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/expert/alphaOrder/view.do?language=EN&id=1394>

HOW TO CONTACT BILL

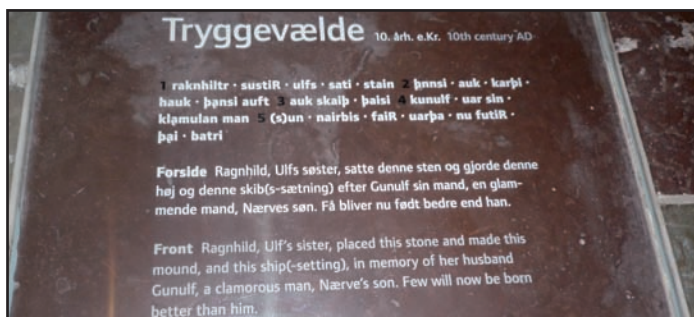
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A Viking memorial stone pre-1000 AD, now in the Danish national museum in Copenhagen (my photograph). The English version says "Ragnhild, in memory of her husband Gunulf, a clamorous man. Few will now be born better than him." It seems that every generation worries about who comes next.

the Past and the Present - frequently asked questions

Why are the EU's annual accounts not approved by the auditors?

About half of annual EU spending is done by Brussels. The other half of each year's budget is transferred to the 27 national governments – to spend on Agriculture and infrastructure projects. At the end of each calendar year, the EU's auditors to examine the spending. Each year they give a clean bill of health to the money spent by Brussels and add comments for improvements. But all 27 national governments, including London, refuse to open their books to the EU auditors. So the EU auditors are unable to say that they have seen all the accounts - and therefore they report that they are not satisfied.

The British media fail to tell the truth about this and pour the blame on Brussels. But the blame rests squarely on the national governments and not with Brussels. MEPs have demanded that the finance ministers of all 27 national governments sign an annual "NMD" (national management declaration) accepting responsibility for the way that EU money has been spent in their countries. So far, only four (Denmark, Netherlands, UK, and Sweden) have done so.

In addition, the Council of Ministers (which is the forum of the 27 national governments) is refusing to answer questions about its 2009 accounts.

We British need to be careful about being critical. The accounts of the UK's own Department of Work & Pensions have not been approved by its British auditors for more than fourteen years in a row!

Why do MEPs use two parliament buildings in both Brussels and in Strasbourg?

In 1992, national leaders (under the chairmanship of UK prime minister John Major) wrote into a treaty that the decision about where MEPs work is to be made unanimously by them, the 27 national governments alone, and that MEPs have no say.

MEPs hate this and wish to concentrate in Brussels because our job is to control the Commission. But John Major's treaty gave a veto to France. But now a

possible solution is in sight.

The treaty requires that MEPs must hold "twelve sessions per year in Strasbourg". Until now, that has been twelve separate weekly sessions. But a "session" is not defined, so in October 2012 we MEPs will hold two sessions inside one week - and thus only visit Strasbourg eleven times during 2012. The French are outraged and have taken the parliament to the European Court of Justice. The Coalition government has refused, shamefully, to enter the case on the side of MEPs. The French have insisted on the slow court procedure so the judges' verdict is due in late 2012 (after the French presidential election). If MEPs win, it will become possible for us to hold all twelve sessions inside a single week in Strasbourg – and so the pressure will finally be on for a proper settlement.

Is there too much immigration into Britain?

Migration in and out of the UK is guaranteed for all EU citizens, just as it is for us British into the other 26 member countries. Europe's birth-rate is below breakeven, so there is not an overall problem. Our real problem is that the EU's external borders are inadequately controlled – both to the east where people from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Asia easily slip past the inadequate controls, and to the south where overcrowded boats cross the Mediterranean from northern Africa (where there are no jobs, and many young people see the streets of Europe as paved with gold) to Greece, Italy, France and Spain. More information is available from the website of the EU's Frontiers Agency at www.frontex.eu

If there are too many illegal immigrants entering the UK, clearly our own UK border controls do not work, which is the responsibility of the Home Office in London.

"We only joined a Free Trade Area in 1973"?

In 1973 we British abandoned EFTA, the European Free Trade Area, in order to join the EU. In the referendum in 1975, a government leaflet confirmed the goal of "ever closer union" and it was delivered

to every single UK household. Mrs Thatcher said during the campaign that "It is about much more than free trade." Being inside the EU is very strongly in our national interest. It gives us influence over all the decisions made by other Europeans. We provide multinational companies from America, China and Japan, a place inside the EU Single Market of 500 million customers. If the UK were to quit the EU, it would be the start of national economic suicide. We would lose investment by the multinationals, our best youngsters would leave for better-paid careers elsewhere, and our trade with the EU would become more difficult because we had given up our influence over the rules. Starting from 1945, European countries have been slowly learning to work together. First the goal was Peace. Peace across Europe was not built by NATO (just look at "peace" in Afghanistan) but is built by constructing legal rights for individuals and for trade.

Now, the present goal is for Europeans to learn to work together – all of us being small countries on the world scale – so as to give us all a strong voice vis-à-vis the emerging giants – China, India, USA, Russia, Brazil etc

If Europeans turn that down and prefer to operate separately "independently" in the coming century, our children will find their voices and influence in world decisions is much reduced.

The euro-sceptic Conservative right-wing is incoherent and illogical. They want to "protect the integrity of the Single Market" while also wanting "to repatriate powers" without saying which ones. You cannot do both.



A Baobab tree, more than a thousand years old, which I photographed on holiday in a village by the ocean in south Zanzibar.

Looking To The Future

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS IN BRITAIN

The UK's indebtedness is getting deeper

Britain is still getting deeper and deeper into debt. At least, the Coalition government has started to slow down the rate of increase of our debts, but the total of Britain's debts is still growing larger. An anonymous website (not written by me) explains it quite shockingly at <http://www.debtbombshell.com/>

Inflation in the UK is higher than in the euro-zone. The pound sterling is weak against the euro. When the Euro was created in January 1999, the exchange rate was 1.42 to one pound. Today it is around 1.16 euros to one pound. So, with inflation and devaluation, our savings are losing their value.

When the Euro started, there were five million manufacturing jobs in UK. Now there are three million. By contrast, in Italy there were and there still are five million jobs in manufacturing. Devaluing our currency is not doing us any good.

It is highly disappointing that our government has refused, despite the Coalition pledge, to support the MEPs' fight to get away from Strasbourg. That would save taxpayers hundreds of millions each year – as could abolishing two other bodies in Brussels which have no power at all, "EcoSoc" and the "Committee of the Regions".

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS IN THE EURO-ZONE

it can not manage with 17 different national rules.

It needs one impartial iron fist to ensure that the commitments undertaken by EU member states are respected and enforced.

There has been dithering and delay by the national leaders. Present EU structures are inadequate for rapid crisis-time decision-making. The EU needs a federal centre with real powers.

The core question is : "Are the MS willing to share a greater sovereignty for the good of all, recognising their individual irrelevance in world affairs?"

National governments do not seem to have taken stock of the severity of the situation. What they must now do is exactly the inverse of what they have been doing over the last year. The establishment of a federal fiscal and economic union that can manage the euro and its member states in an effective and democratic way. Anything short of a real integration of economic and fiscal processes will be failure.

Federalism means, in the dictionary, decentralisation with clear written rules about which level does what. This would be an ideal EU arrangement. Compare the UK which is highly centralised.

And the irresponsibility of banks worldwide including Britain's, and the outrageous salaries of top business executives need to be tackled – at a time when real wages (adjusted for 5% inflation in the UK) are falling.

The national EU leaders have to create a strong federal financial union. The alternative means financial chaos for us too.

Helping to clean up the Environment

As rapporteur for the parliament's Environment committee, I have been leading on a piece of EU legislation. The Commission proposed to remove phosphates from detergents in domestic washing-machines. My committee decided to go further and include domestic dishwashers in the change. The effect will be to reduce eutrophication, the spread of algae, which harms wild-life in our rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and seas. Sadly, the UK government was resistant. But, with support from enough continental national governments, I got the necessary majority to create this new EU law.

Is the money wasted which we donate for Development?

I serve on the parliament's Development committee. The short answer is that "some of our aid gets through but some is wasted." Two photos on this page show successful examples – teaching mothers in eastern India not to marry off their daughters at age 13, and irrigation in Tanzania. But aid given to Haiti after its massive earthquake has not resulted in adequate reconstruction.

How to make more of our aid successful ? The 27 national EU governments should start to liaise with each other (incredibly, they do not liaise at present) in order to reduce duplication and lack of coordination. In Africa we do not have enough people on the ground to see where the money goes because Europe finances so many different projects. Bill Gates (ex Microsoft) described to our committee how, when he donates aid for a medical project, he sends someone along to check whether the money is being well spent and, if it is not, he cancels the payment.



In central Tanzania, cows are parked, waiting for their owners to return with refilled water containers, before hauling them back to their villages.



Visiting a village in Bihar, the poorest state in India, where the poorest women are helped not to marry off their daughters at thirteen years old

STAY IN TOUCH

Send me your email address so I can keep you informed. My email is bill.newtondunn@europarl.europa.eu
If you have a change of address, please let me know.

WATCH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AT WORK

MEPs hold their committee meetings and their full-scale debates in public. You can watch from home "on-line" by googling EuroParlTV or by going to the following website <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/StartPage.aspx>

VISIT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE CITY OF BRUSSELS

You can visit the parliament on your own or with others. There is no need to book in advance unless you bring a large group. Check in advance whether the parliament will be meeting in Brussels or Strasbourg on your proposed date, and whether I will be there to welcome you.

Mrs Julie Hirst organises groups for me to come to Brussels. Tell her that you might be interested to join a bus group by emailing her at julie_hirst2000@yahoo.co.uk

If you want to bring a large group yourself, plenty of advance notice is required by the parliament because large numbers of visitors arrive every day from all over Europe. Brussels has plenty of good museums, as well as the site of the Battle of Waterloo.

JOIN THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PARTY

Our policies on-line at <http://www.libdems.org.uk/>

The text of the agreement for the Coalition between the Lib Dems and the Tories is at

http://www.libdems.org.uk/latest_news_detail.aspx?title=Conservative_Liberal_Democrat_coalition_agreements&pPK=2697bcde-7483-47a7-a517-7778979458ff

If you like what we stand for, then please join us or make a donation. The recommended rate is £45 per year, but concessions are available. You can join by writing to our headquarters at 8-10 Great George Street, London SW1P 3AE (telephone 020 7222 7999). Or join on-line at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/support/join.html>

STUDY IN THE REST OF EUROPE

Three useful schemes are :

- ERASMUS for higher education students to study for part of their degree in another European country.
- LEONARDO DA VINCI for people to travel to other parts of Europe for vocational education and training.
- GRUNTVIG for personal development. It funds adults who are not in higher education to visit other European countries for training, job shadowing, or work placement. Further information at <http://www.scholarshipportal.eu/> or http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.HTML or http://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe/index_en.html

FOR TRAINEESHIPS AT THE PARLIAMENT OR THE COMMISSION

Parliament europarl.europa.eu/parliament/public/staticDisplay.do?id=147
Commission ec.europa.eu/stages/index_en.htm

SEARCH FOR A JOB IN BRUSSELS OR IN POLITICS

- try www.euro-jobbing.com/ or <http://Europa.eu/epso/> or www.eu-jobsite.com or www.w4mpjobs.org/

FOR ACCURATE REPORTING ABOUT EUROPE

There are only three sources which are reliable and accurate :

- the daily Financial Times newspaper
- the weekly EuroVoice newspaper (also at www.eurovoice.com) which is published by The Economist
- a good daily report at <http://euroobserver.com/>

WEBSITES WHICH MIGHT BE USEFUL

- my personal page on the European Parliament's website is <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/public/geoSearch/view.do?country=GB&partNumber=1&zone=East+Midlands&language=EN&id=1394>
- the European Parliament main website <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>
- the Commission website http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm
- the Council of Ministers website <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>
- the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg <http://europa.eu/institutions/inst/justice/>
- the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (which is not part of the EU) <http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/Basic+Texts/The+Convention+and+additional+protocols/The+European+Convention+on+Human+Rights/>
- get Solvit to help solve your EU problem http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/site/index_en.htm



Meeting Frank de Winne at the European Space Agency research centre at Noordwijk, He was the first European to command the International Space Station.