



Summer 2012

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 FOR OUR REGION

Bill's Bulletin for the East Midlands



May I send you an occasional report about what is happening in the European Parliament?

If "yes", please send an email to bill.newtondunn@ep.europa.eu. If you prefer to receive a report by post, please post me your address to 10 Church Lane, Navenby, Lincoln LN5 0EG

What do we gain from the EU?

The longest period of unbroken peace in Europe in all history. A single market with open borders, leading to enormously increased exports, so to jobs and prosperity. Individual freedoms to cross borders and to live or buy property wherever we choose.

PEACE

For centuries, we fought the Romans, Vikings, French, Spanish, and Germans. After 1945, Winston Churchill called for "a kind of United States of Europe". The European Union was created in order to provide peace between traditional enemies in Europe. More states joined when they became democratic after communism died. Now we are 27 but the task is not finished. The states in the Balkans, some still hostile to each other, are in Europe. When they guarantee to live in peace they will also be admitted. Today, war between Europeans is unthinkable — a wonderful gift for our descendants.

PROSPERITY

Many barriers and border controls inside the EU have been lowered. That created extra freedom and rights for people and a single market of over five hundred million consumers. Both Britain's exports and our imports with Europe have soared and consequently there are many more British jobs.

STRONG NEGOTIATING POSITION WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD

Britain is no longer a world power (although some in the House of Commons behave as if we are). Our armed forces have shrunk, we can not defend the Falklands, and we have aircraft carriers but no aircraft for them. Our national debts are gigantic and still rising. We are sixty

million people, which in world terms is nothing compared with a billion Chinese, a billion Indians, gas-rich Russia, and superpower USA. (Did you read that when Obama was first elected, he sent back to London the bust of Churchill from the White House basement? What "special relationship"?) The UK, on its own, is increasingly irrelevant in world negotiations. But working with five hundred million Europeans, we have a strong voice together. It is deeply damaging to Britain that half the Conservative party is so negative about Europe, and that Cameron withdrew his MEPs from their strong alliance and then flounced out of a European leaders' summit last December. We should be playing an active positive role, not whinging on the side-lines. UKIP has no alternative plan for Britain, and no policies inside the UK.

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Questions and Answers

How many people work for European Commission?

Around 38,000 work in the European Commission to coordinate activities across the EU's 27 member states.

See http://europa.eu/about-eu/facts-figures/administration/index_en.htm

For comparison, a single county council in our region, Leicestershire, employs 20,078 ("full time equivalent").

Why don't auditors sign the annual EU accounts?

Half of annual EU spending is done by Brussels. The other half is transferred by the EU to the 27 national governments. Every year, the EU auditors examine the spending by Brussels and point out errors. But all 27 national governments, including London, refuse to open their books to the EU auditors. The British government and media fail to tell the truth about their refusal and pour the blame on Brussels. Six years ago, every member state, including the UK, promised MEPs to provide an annual summary of how it spent money which the EU gave it for infrastructure and regional development. But 13 of the 27 member states refuse to let MEPs see their summaries. MEPs insist that "summaries" are inadequate anyway. In addition, the Council of Ministers (the chamber for the 27 national governments) refuses to answer questions about its own spending.

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

Why do MEPs hold meetings in both Brussels and in Strasbourg?

In 1992, national leaders (under the chairmanship of UK prime minister John Major) agreed a treaty that where MEPs work is decided unanimously by them, the 27 national governments, and that MEPs have no say. MEPs hate this and wish to concentrate in Brussels because our job is to control the executive, the Commission. But Major's treaty gave a veto to France.

Now a possible solution is in sight. The treaty required that MEPs hold "twelve sessions per year in Strasbourg". Until

now, that was twelve separate weekly sessions. But a "session" is not defined, so in October 2012 MEPs will hold two sessions inside one week - and thus only visit Strasbourg eleven times in 2012. The French are outraged and have taken the parliament to the Europe's supreme court, the Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Our Coalition government refused, shamefully, to enter the case on the side of MEPs "because we did not wish to upset the French". The judges' verdict is due in late 2012. If MEPs win, it will become possible to hold all twelve sessions inside a single week in Strasbourg - and so the pressure will finally be on for a proper settlement in a single place.



The 12 Lib Dem MEPs

Didn't we join a FreeTrade Area in 1973?

No, in 1973, Britain abandoned the European Free Trade Area, in order to join the EU. In the referendum in 1975, a government leaflet confirmed the goal was "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 the decisions made by other Europeans. We provide multinational companies from America, China and Japan, a place inside the EU Single Market. If the UK were to quit the EU, it would be the start of national economic suicide. We would lose investment by 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. Since 1945, European countries have been learning to work together. First the goal was Peace. Peace

across Europe was not built by NATO (has NATO created "peace" in Afghanistan?) but is built by constructing legal rights for individuals. Now, the goal is for Europeans - all of us being small countries on the world scale - to have a strong combined voice vis-à-vis the emerging giants - China, India, USA, Russia, Brazil etc. If Europeans chose instead to operate separately in the coming century, our children would find their influence in world decisions is much reduced.

Why is the UK so negative?

I think it is something to do with a resistance to change felt by the Commons and by the Establishment in London. There is a clue in a great novel The Leopard written by a Sicilian about 1860. It graphically describes Sicilian reluctance to accept change as the world changed around them and Italy began to unite. 150 years later that island is poor and in the grip of the Mafia which still opposes change. If some British think things are so bad in Europe, why are they so good? Since 1945 we Europeans have lost geopolitical power but have gained the best quality of life in global history, we live longer than anywhere else except Japan, we are richer than any previous generation, we have more leisure time than Americans, and we are doing more to fight Climate Change.

Why is the Coalition government necessary?

Because no party gained an overall majority in the 2009 General Election and Britain was found, after Gordon Brown's leadership, to have enormous debts. To have formed a coalition with Labour, who got the country into the mess, would have been unacceptable to the majority of voters. To have triggered a second General Election would have caused huge uncertainty on international markets and a run on the pound sterling. By going into coalition, the Lib Dems have done exactly the best thing for Britain, to try to restore our nation's financial position. And we have some good achievements including cutting taxes for millions of working people, introduced the Youth Contract and Pupil Premium and are putting into place the Green Investment Bank and Green Deal.

Reforming of Policies

Zoos: raising the standards in Europe's 4,000 zoos

I was proud to host an exhibition in the parliament in Brussels in April. It was the launch of reports made by the Born Free foundation about the unacceptable state of some zoos in many EU member states. The photo shows Virginia McKenna, who starred in the movie Born Free and worked closely with lions, about to make the opening speech.

Fish Fight: progress with reforming the EU Fisheries Policy

The Commission (to whom the EU treaties give full control over fishing) says that the two main problems are sustainability and discards. They want to reach a greener approach, sustainable stocks by 2015, and to eliminate discarding. They will close areas and stop the building of big new vessels. But too many member states wish to continue as before specially around the Mediterranean. Italians and Greeks will have to change their habit of preferring to eat young fish. There is a gap in compliance with the rules between north Europe and the Mediterranean states.

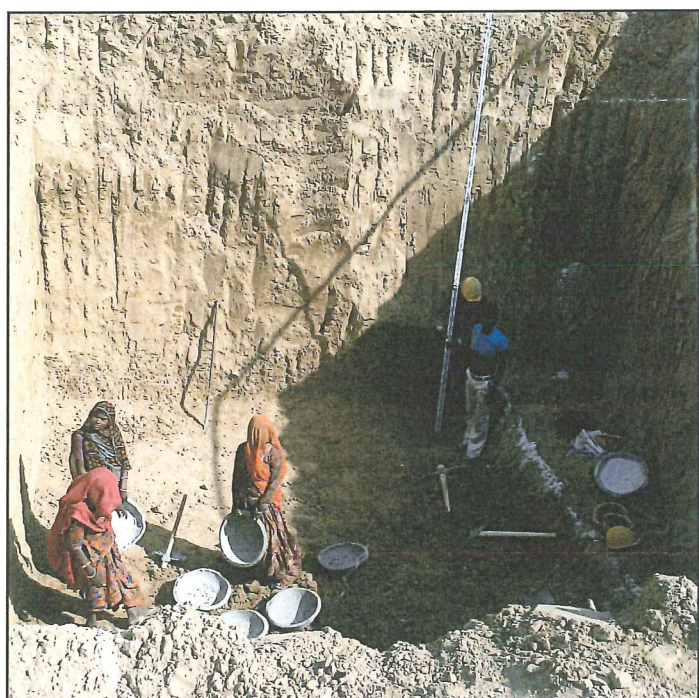
It is possible to follow progress with this link to the work of the parliament's Fisheries committee <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/pech/home.html>

Starting the fight back against cross-border organised crime

Europe loses probably hundreds of thousands of jobs, and misses uncountable amounts of tax revenues, because international gangs smuggle in counterfeited goods, traffick in drugs and illegal immigrants, cheat all of us on the internet, and money-launder their gains. At present we fail to fight them successfully because all of Europe's police forces are restricted inside their county or national borders and can not pursue the gangs across borders.

In March the parliament has created a special committee to assess the sheer scale of the problem, and to propose how to fight it. Measures such as closing tax havens (which are mostly sponsored by the UK), tightening up external border controls, and creating an FBI cross-border police force may emerge. I am leading for the Liberals on the committee.

The committee's work can be followed at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/crim/home.html>



Indian pit

Development Aid for less fortunate countries

Aid should be given because we are lucky to live in a prosperous part of the world. But it is also in our own long term interest, to make more prosperous export markets and to build political stability. The great challenge is to get good value for the money that we give. It is estimated that six billion is lost by the failure of EU national governments to cooperate together over their plans. The UK is one of the culprits, but at least it has promised to raise its contribution to 0.7% of our national annual income. We should not try to reduce the UK debts over the backs of the poorest people of the world. EU aid to the Indian government is stopping but curiously UK government aid to India will continue "but switched to concentrate on the private sector".

The photograph, which I took, shows a centre for water purification which is partly financed by the EU. The pit is in the desert outside Jaipur city and is being dug by hand.

The work of the parliament's Development (on which I serve) can be followed at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/deve/home.html>

STAY IN TOUCH

Send me your email address so I can keep you informed.
Mine is bill.newtondunn@ep.europa.eu
If you change your address, please let me know.

VISIT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE CITY OF BRUSSELS

Anyone may visit the parliament. There is no need to book in advance but 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. Or you can join a group organised by Mrs Julie Hirst. Her email is julie_hirst2000@yahoo.co.uk

Brussels also has plenty of good museums, as well as the fascinating site of the Battle of Waterloo.



A school group visiting the EP

WATCH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AT WORK

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

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

In the Parliament, <http://europarl.europa.eu/parliament/public/staticDisplay.do?id=147>

In the Commission http://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 four sources which seem to me to be reliable and accurate:

- the daily Financial Times newspaper
- the weekly EuroVoice newspaper (also at www.eurovoice.com) published by The Economist
- the daily report at <http://euroobserver.com/>
- <http://www.votewatch.eu/> compiled by the London School of Economics

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/>
- Solvit to help solve your EU problem http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/site/index_en.htm

JOIN A POLITICAL PARTY AND HELP TO CHANGE SOMETHING

Which political party should you join ? What are the basic difference between Britain's parties?

The Conservatives believe in the power of money and in their traditional right to rule. They are against change and they are mainly financed by millionaires.

Labour oppose the power of money and privilege. To block them, they increase the size of central government and raise your taxes. The trade unions finance them. They ran up the enormous debts under which Britain is now suffering.

Liberal Democrats put the rights of the individual and of minorities first. We have no rich backers. We want decentralisation, to put power back in the hands of local people. Of the three major parties we are the greenest, the most European, and the most for international cooperation.

Or you can protest with a party with no coherent policies - in Britain it is UKIP, in Sweden and Germany it is the Pirates. So, please join the Liberal Democrats and help us to modernise Britain.

Our policies on-line at <http://www.libdems.org.uk/> If you like what we stand for, then please join us or make a donation. 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>