

Report from the MEP –Bill Newton Dunn

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Here is my March report from the parliament:

Controversy over proposed EU law for Motorcycles

For at least six months British MEPs have received torrents of identical emails about a proposed EU regulation for motorcycles. Emailing is fine but what normally follows is that lobbyists come to the parliament and explain calmly what they need and answer our questions. Unfortunately, the UK's motorcyclist leaders (known as MAG) appear to have been given the wrong advice about how to lobby. The leading motorcycle magazine was, I am told, advised what to do by a UKIP MEP. So, instead of coming into the parliament and talking to MEPs, motorcyclists chose to block the M1 motorway last autumn thus annoying the British public but having no effect on Brussels. This was followed by a demonstration in Brussels by a hundred UK-only motorcyclists which was so small that nobody in the parliament noticed it. The unhappiness of British motorcyclists, not fully shared by continental motorcycling organisations, is about the proposed new EU law. The existing EU law for motorcycles says that owners of small motorcycles up to 125cc may not modify the power aspects of their machines. The new proposal would extend this ban to all motorcycles including the most powerful. The Commission proposal for the law would only control "modifications by manufacturers", but the responsible committee in the parliament has added "after manufacture" too. The full parliament is likely to vote the First Reading in late-April or mid-May. UK motorbikers are upset because they are individualists who like to make their machines different from everybody else's and they fear this law will limit their individuality. After months of requests, I managed to obtain a briefing in Brussels from a German who works in the bikers' EU-umbrella body in Brussels (known as FEMA), but it appears that most British MEPs have still not been briefed. There is an urgent need for the MAG leaders to quickly modify their lobbying methods, get across to Brussels and talk, or their cause may be lost.

ACTA treaty

MEPs have also received large numbers of emails against the proposed ACTA treaty. The treaty proposes tougher measures against Countering of intellectual property and goods. The emails express fears that individual liberties may be affected, particularly concerning downloading from the internet of music and films and other copyright works. I have replied to every email but it was curious that some bounced straight back, suggesting that some emails had been sent en masse from an old database and had not been sent to me by individual constituents. The European Commission has proposed referring the text of the treaty to Europe's supreme court (the ECJ in Luxembourg) for the judges to rule whether the liberties of individual European citizens would be infringed. The process may take up to two years. So any ratification by the parliament goes onto the back-burner.

Reforming the Common Fisheries Policy

The parliament's Fisheries committee is forging ahead with its proposals for reforms. You can, if you wish, follow the details on <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/PECH/home.html>. But there will be difficulty in finding agreement on the new common rules because of blocking in the other chamber, the Council of Ministers, by ministers of some national governments. The blockage is caused by countries who do not wish for any serious reforms - led by the French, Othe Belgians and some Mediterranean countries. They fear a bad effect on their fishing fleets. And Greeks and

Italians love eating young fish, so their life-style habits are being asked to change. There is still disagreement about what to do with fish caught accidentally which until now have been thrown back dead into the sea.

Enforcement of the new rules remains a tricky problem too. Until now, each country did its own enforcement, hence irresponsible overfishing even by the UK. The Commission, under the EU treaties, will have total control over the new CFP but lacks strong powers to intervene where cheating continues. Its present plan is to pay fishing businesses to report details of their catches direct to Brussels - and using that information to increase inspection from Brussels. No reports, no money from Brussels they say. But will the reports they are given be accurate, I wonder?

New parliamentary committee to investigate Organised Crime

The parliament has set up a new committee to investigate the state of organised crime across Europe. The core problem is that drugs, immigrants, counterfeit goods etc, are moved freely and everywhere by international gangs but our police can not deal with them, being limited by county or national borders. First details

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20120314IPR40749/html/Mafias-special-committee-to-probe-organised-crime-in-the-EU>. Its membership will be decided in a vote on 29th March, but I have strong hopes....

Zoo conditions across Europe

I am hosting an exhibition in the parliament in late April about conditions in zoos across Europe. The Born Free Foundation has researched and written reports about the inadequate standards they have discovered in many of Europe's four thousand zoos. I am glad to help them publicise their findings.

Visit the parliament in Brussels by bus in the first week of June ! Details from Julie_Hirst2000@yahoo.co.uk

Finally, Helmer

To nobody's surprise, Roger Helmer has left the Conservative party and joined UKIP. He has a legal right to do it. Winston Churchill changed parties twice. Edmund Burke laid down in 1777 that people who are elected are representatives chosen to exercise their independent judgment, and are not delegates for carrying messages. But when I joined the Liberal Democrats in 2000, Helmer's exact words in the chamber of the European Parliament were

Madam President, Mr Newton Dunn is perfectly correct when he draws attention to Rule 2, but what he forgets is that the elections in 1999 took place under proportional representation. No elector voted for Mr Newton Dunn, or indeed for me or for Mr Heaton-Harris. They voted for a party list and Mr Newton Dunn represented himself as fully in support of the Conservative Party, its leader and its European policy. He has now completely abrogated that position and he is therefore denying the democratic rights of the voters of the East Midlands, over 40% of whom voted Conservative. I call on Mr Newton Dunn to resign.

So, Helmer says that nobody voted for him. So will then he follow his own advice to me and resign ? Is he true to his word?

All the best, Bill