

Report to Nottinghamshire from Bill Newton Dunn MEP

Good morning ! Here is my November 2012 report from the parliament.

Analysis of how Obama won the election

He won a comfortable victory by putting together a broad coalition. He won the votes of blacks, of liberal women, 71% of Hispanics (despite them being against abortion), of Asian-Americans, and of native Americans, and of automobile workers, who are normally conservative and Republican, because he rescued the car industry

Interestingly, evangelical Christians did not vote for Romney, because they experience intense competition with Mormons to find new converts in developing countries. Romney being a Mormon.

How can the Republicans win next time with the TEA party on their right ? Only white males voted for Romney in large numbers and whites are a shrinking proportion of the American population.

The three big losers among supporters of the Republicans were : Karl Rove the famous pollster, Netanyahu the leader of Israel, and Wall Street financiers who were upset about the Dodds-Frank Act which specifies large rewards for whistleblowers who provide information about violations of the Securities Acts.

Appointment of a new Commissioner

John Dalli from Malta, recently resigned from the Commission. His proposed replacement is the Foreign Minister of Malta, Mr Tonio Borg. He was subjected last week to a tough public three-hour hearing by a parliamentary committee. Then followed a heavy emailing campaign to all MEPs from Roman Catholics in Poland in support of Borg's ultra-conservative Catholic personal views opposing abortion, contraception, gay rights, etc But MEPs voted him into office, see <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20121116IPR55761/html/Borg-secures-EP-backing-as-Commissioner-after-week-of-tension>

Motorcycles

An EU regulation to upgrade safety and environmental standards, was passed by 643 in favour, 16 against, and 18 abstentions. The Motorcycle Action Group (who organised demonstrations on the M1 motorway against the proposed legislation but never came to see me inside the parliament to explain their detailed objections) to the bitter end urged MEPs with letters to reject the law on the grounds that the procedure was illegal - even though none of the 27 national governments has raised any objection to the procedure.

The official report is at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20121116IPR55754/html/Upgraded-type-approval-rules-for-motorbikes>

Israel and Gaza

The cease-fire is very welcome indeed. The parliament voted a strongly supportive text.

This was a new kind of war, with both sides sending MEPs frequent email reports about what is happening, sometimes every hour. Both sides

used the social media. But the Israelis say that pictures from Hamas - see "Israel in Europe" on Facebook - include earlier photos taken from fighting in Syria and from Gaza four years ago. Israel hoped that, with the mass of information sent by both sides, the world would make up its own mind.

Background : When Israel withdrew from Gaza four years ago and previously from Lebanon, it was regarded by opponents as a sign of weakness. As soon as Israel left, the rockets started coming from Gaza. They were launched indiscriminately, not targeted at military installations and the launching sites were located among the crowded Gazan population, inside hospitals, schools, and private houses. The rockets are supplied by Iran and China and come through the Sinai tunnels. But Israel has developed its "Iron Dome" defence, which brings down missiles launched towards populated areas and they claimed an 87% success rate.

To me the key to the solution is simple. Hamas has to recognise the right of Israel to exist - but will it do that while being egged on by Iran ? Only then can peace-making begin, the living conditions for the Palestinians improve, and the two state solution be achieved.

EU Financial dispute

Three separate financial issues are up for decision in the Council between the 27 member states of the EU.

1. A supplementary budget for 2012. Among the member states which will suffer if their bills can not be paid by the Commission is the UK - because a substantial part of the bills presented for payment to the Commission are for the Erasmus programme from which the UK benefits most because most European students choose to study for a year in the UK in order to improve their English.

If Cameron "vetoes" the supplementary budget, the bills will remain unpaid, and we would see a new supplementary budget proposed in 2013 to get the bills outstanding from 2012 paid to the member states including the UK.

2. The 2013 EU budget

The dispute is whether the budget is to be frozen at the 2012 level, or increased for inflation, or increased as proposed by the Commission. Different member states take different views. Cameron is boxed into the hardest line. It is decided by the two chambers - Parliament and Council jointly. If the Council makes no decision, the process is blocked and 2013 will start using the 2012 budget again but increased for inflation. So Cameron does not have a veto and the 2013 budget would increase by 1.7%.

As an extra complication, France's national finances are deteriorating fast, and Moody's downgraded them this week.

3. The Multiannual Financial Framework - called for short, MFF - about setting ceilings for the annual EU budgets between 2014 and 2020. On the table is a Commission proposal for a 5% increase in spending through to 2020 justified by there being areas where EU spending replaces 27 national sets of spending and so saves money overall.

The Council is split with the 17 countries who are net recipients of EU cash making it clear that a 5% increase is a bare minimum. On the other side are the 10 net paying countries (so called "friends of better spending") demanding cuts which reflect the tough economic times faced by all citizens across Europe. Those who pay the piper call the tune and that means the real debate is how to close the gap between the countries who pay for the budget. France, Germany, Austria, Denmark and Belgium want to see at least 70 billion Euros shaved off the budget but the UK, Sweden, and the Netherlands want to go further, calling for a real term freeze which is a 100 billion Euro reduction.

If you'd like to read a summary of yesterday's debate in the parliament, see

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20121116IPR55763/html/EU-must-have-strong-and-flexible-EU-budget-for-2014->

2020-say-political-groups

For background information, the following table shows the amounts paid into the EU budget each year. The states not listed are recipients. Just as in society, the rich countries pay, the poor ones receive.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total 2001-2011
DE	-6.971,5	-4.954,0	-7.605,4	-7.140,4	-6.064,3	-6.325,2	-7.415,2	-8.774,3	-6.357,5	-9.223,6	-9.002,5	-79.833,9
FR	-2.043,4	-2.218,4	-1.976,1	-3.050,7	-2.883,5	-3.012,5	-2.997,3	-3.842,7	-5.872,7	-5.534,8	-6.405,8	-39.837,9
IT	-2.030,9	-2.917,1	-849,8	-2.946,9	-2.199,0	-1.731,8	-2.013,5	-4.101,4	-5.058,5	-4.534,0	-5.933,0	-34.315,9
UK	+955,4	-2.528,4	-2.364,9	-2.864,9	-1.529,0	-2.140,2	-4.155,3	-844,3	-1.903,3	-5.625,9	-5.565,6	-28.566,3
NL	-2.259,9	-2.171,3	-1.942,2	-2.034,9	-2.636,6	-2.587,6	-2.864,3	-2.678,2	+117,7	-1.833,1	-2.214,0	-23.104,4
SE	-982,9	-750,4	-945,6	-1.059,8	-866,9	-856,6	-994,8	-1.463,1	-85,6	-1.211,4	-1.325,4	-10.542,5
BE	-745,2	-517,7	-779,7	-536,1	-607,5	-709,9	-868,2	-720,6	-1.663,9	-1.466,4	-1.369,6	-9.984,8
DK	-223,1	-169,1	-220,0	-224,6	-265,3	-505,2	-604,4	-543,2	-969,5	-615,3	-836,6	-5.176,3
AT	-542,4	-212,6	-330,9	-365,1	-277,9	-301,5	-563,2	-356,4	-402,1	-677,0	-805,1	-4.834,2
FI	-153,0	-4,9	-26,7	-69,6	-84,8	-241,0	-171,6	-318,5	-544,2	-300,2	-652,1	-2.566,6
LU	-140,0	-48,1	-57,2	-93,6	-86,8	-60,2	-139,8	-22,1	-100,2	-41,9	-75,0	-864,9

Fisheries reform

Before the Lisbon Treaty gave MEPs equal powers over Fishing with the 27 national fishery ministers, the ministers made the decisions together in secret. Now, the ministers are refusing to recognise the new situation and to listen to the parliament's publicly agreed views on reform of fishing rules. So, this week, MEPs decided to start playing hard-ball with the ministers, and are refusing cooperation until the ministers pay attention and compromise, as they must.

Look out for

- 25th November, for the election in Catalonia in Spain where its independence party is hoping to win.
- 29th November, when President Abbas of Palestine (who is opposed by Hamas) goes to the UN to ask for non-member observer status for Palestine, which is the status given to the Vatican
- 5th December, for the Autumn Statement by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer. I hear that figures show that the UK is still living far beyond its means, and the coalition has failed to make enough cuts. I hear that "fourteen billion pounds" more cuts are needed immediately this year, with even greater cuts needed in the following two years. Cameron has vetoed any Mansion tax, so there have to be further tax increases on petrol, and deep cuts into welfare benefits. So, the needy must shoulder the burden and the Conservatives' wealthy supporters escape paying extra taxes (just as they did a year ago when the top rate of income tax was reduced).

- 13th December, when Europe's supreme court, the ECJ, is to announce its ruling about the battle between parliament's two meeting places, Brussels and Strasbourg, which could start to save a huge amount of money.

Finally

Euro-Sceptics in Britain say "we want to make our own decisions". But Britain lives in an interconnected globalised world. If we were to leave the EU, others will create the rules by which the UK has to operate. Britain would still be compelled to adopt EU legislation without having any say about the way it was written. Therefore, since we wish to have influence over our own destiny we must be involved in the external decisions which affect us and that means firmly remaining a member of the EU..

You might enjoy watching this head-on criticism of Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP, for doing no parliamentary work but still drawing his salary and expenses. The speaker is the leader of the Liberal Group, Guy Verhofstadt MEP, previously prime minister of Belgium for ten years.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getVod.do?mode=unit&language=EN&vodId=1353496011954>

All the best
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