

## Democracy for the sake of it? - part 4

By

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*As we continue to ponder the issue of representativeness [0], **Paul Davies** - formerly of the Electoral Reform Society - continues his series looking at the EU's only democratic institution (Part 1 [0], Part 2 [0], part 3 [0]):*

Having already established that the European Parliament is one of the world's true bastions of barmy democracy, it's time to consider how to make it a little less ridiculous.

Before we start on that, however, there's an important extra step to be considered - one often glossed over by the current architects of the Union. Simply drawing up plans for making the European Parliament saner or more fit for purpose begs the question of what that purpose actually is (or maybe should be) in the first place.

The bods in Brussels have used up a truly impressive amount of woodland in previous attempts to tell us what the European Union, and by implication the European Parliament, is all about, but as is the way with these things, the woods have been transformed into mere waffle, signifying very little and more often than not sounding all rather confused.

Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union is clear enough in outlining the big-picture role of the EU, but delve into the EU's monumental rule book, the *acquis communautaire*, and things quickly become a lot more baffling.

This confusion was further fattened up by the dramatic expansion of the Union to its current 27-member status. Suddenly, finding anything that the members had in common aside from being almost constantly annoyed with France was a very tricky task indeed.

And therein lies the problem, democratically and representatively speaking. The European Union is arguably now far too big to support a purposeful parliament.

*"a great state is not the same thing as a state with a large population. But certainly experience*

*also shows that it is difficult and perhaps impossible for a state with too large a population to have good legal government." - Aristotle, Politics, 1326a*

However, such philosophising is somewhat unhelpful when considering the practical situation of a pan-national supra-parliament with juridical power over almost 500 million people. The European Union is certainly here to stay, and will continue to be something between a glorified free-trade area and an alarmingly-enormo-superstate until it's accidentally H-bombed by the Russians.

Trying to decide upon a purpose, or purposes, for a body as big and as brutal as the European Union is not something it's wise to go into here. What we can concern ourselves with, however, is the role of the European Parliament, and specifically how it relates to the people upon whose votes it rests.

Thankfully, until the mildly perplexing issue of offering a solution is looked at (which we'll do next time) this is easy.

The European Parliament should represent the views of the people of the Union, in all their wide-ranging and whimsical glory. It should also do something to show these lovely citizens what it is that goes on after the votes are counted (and hopefully with extra transparency being extra good and relevant), thus giving the valorous voters something to cast their ballot on next time that isn't simply related to their irrelevant domestic issues.

Across the Union, the Parliament's composition and vote-casting rules should make sure that every member nation has a fair say in what goes on that affects the people inside its borders.

In short, every member nation should be properly represented in a shiny happy union of European people.

Sadly, this is where it stops being easy and instead becomes tiresome, treacherous and quite possibly evil too.

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