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Welcome to my September round-up from the European Parliament

Labour MEPs spent this week at the European Parliament in Strasbourg debating and voting on a wide range of issues, from greenhouse gas emissions to oil spills.

Help whistleblowers to prevent North Sea oil spills

On Tuesday the European Parliament approved proposals by Labour to assist offshore gas and oil workers in raising safety concerns. Labour's proposals were backed by MEPs who want action to be taken in the light of the major oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico last year and to ensure that a similar disaster does not occur in European waters. The mistakes that led to the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico cannot be repeated in our waters. New 'safety reps' would be able to ask questions and speak out without fear of harassment.

MEPs demand stricter rules on greenhouse gases

On Wednesday, Labour MEPs voted to speed up efforts to reduce emissions of fluorinated gases, such as those used in fridges. While climate policy often focuses on carbon dioxide, tougher measures against other greenhouse emissions could be relatively cheap and deliver quick results. The European Parliament also wants the EU to reduce soot emissions through stricter testing of car emissions.

Stable food prices to end Horn of Africa famine

On Thursday the European Parliament called for changes to EU law to ensure fairer food pricing and help end the famine that has claimed tens of thousands of lives in East Africa. There are 13 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and European governments must act to support the region. Financial institutions should show that their commitments to corporate social responsibility are more than just words and recognise the impact of their business on these countries.

Final thought...

Is it me, or has spontaneous combustion in road vehicles become habit-forming over the summer months? Everyday we hear traffic news telling us that a vehicle fire is causing disruption. Now, cars and lorries surely don't just burst into flames for no

apparent reason so I can only assume that a lack of maintenance or defective vehicles are the main causes for this pyrotechnic increase. The problem with vehicle fire, apart from the obvious danger to lives, is that they melt the road surface, which necessitates resurfacing by the Highways Agency. Maybe we now need to think about a stricter inspection regime on HGVs to put an end to the latest phenomenon on our roads: the spontaneously combustible lorry.

Finally, the proposed new Parliamentary boundaries are out and the North West (surprise, surprise) is the region that will lose the most seats. Now, it's no good blaming the Boundary Commission, they had to come up with constituencies based on criteria given to them by the Coalition Government; so no surprise then that the whole thing is a botched job from start to finish. One word describes it perfectly; gerrymandering. This is the Tory-Lib Dem coalition's attempts to fix the next General Election by fixing the parliamentary boundaries in their favour.

With best wishes,

Brian Simpson MEP

Labour MEP for the North West of England
Chair of the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee

If you have a Labour Party event that you would like to promote in your area, please let me know and I will try to include it in my next email bulletin.

If I can help you, please get in touch:

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