

RIP Jens-Peter Bonde, Europe's 'Mr Transparency'

CIB was sad to learn of the death of Jens-Peter Bonde, the former Danish eurosceptic MEP who passed away aged 73 on Easter Sunday following a battle with cancer.

Bonde was one of the longest serving members of the European Parliament, having been elected to that body in its first direct elections in 1979. He was re-elected six times consecutively and was a member of the conference of presidents for 17 years. He was known throughout Europe as a lifelong campaigner for democracy and transparency in the EU, earning himself the nickname 'Mr Transparency'.

Bonde was one of the founders of the Danish People's Movement and campaigned against EEC membership for Denmark in its 1972 referendum. Following Denmark's Maastricht Treaty Referendum in 1993, he accepted the fact of Denmark's EU membership and founded the Danish June Movement to campaign for more democracy and transparency in the EU and its institutions. He tried to push for a 'Europe of nations', resisting the growing tide of EU federalism from within – unfortunately, to little avail.

He was the author of over twenty books on EU topics and is perhaps best known for his production of the 'Reader-Friendly Edition of the EU Treaties', with its invaluable index which enables people to find their way around the complex EU treaties. He was married to Lisbeth Kirk, the founder of EUobserver.

Perhaps Bonde's greatest legacy to the Danish people was his role in persuading them not to adopt the Euro. Daniel Hannan, British Conservative MEP (1999-2020), worked with Bonde on the successful 'No' campaign in the country's 2000 referendum on

joining the single currency. Hannan related,

'We started more than 20 points behind in the polls, but Bonde knew how to appeal to waverers. He block-booked advertising space with bus companies all over the country. A week before polling day, a question appeared on the side of almost every Danish bus: "Do you know enough to abolish the Crown [the krone, the Danish currency] forever yet?" It was the "yet" that did it, rallying undecideds to the status quo and carrying us to a surprise victory.'

Of course, the British independence movement (and UKIP especially) was only ever committed to leaving the EU, not improving it. So Bonde was better known in Ireland, where he took part in all nine EU-related referendums between 1972 and 2012 in support of the EU-critical side. As such, he was close friends with regular CIB contributor, Irish independence campaigner Prof. Anthony Coughlan. Coughlan commented, 'Jens-Peter Bonde's death means that Denmark and Europe have lost a great democrat and internationalist and Ireland has lost a very good friend.'

Jens-Peter Bonde's many friends and admirers in Denmark and internationally will mourn his passing, and our thoughts are with his widow Lisbeth and their children.

Image credit: European Parliament Multimedia Centre